FREDERICK WILLIAM THE GREAT

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Life of Frederick William

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LIFE OF FREDERICK WILLIAM
THE GREAT ELECTOR OF BRANDENBURG

FREDERICK WILLIAM, THE GREAT ELECTOR OF BRANDENBURG
From a portrait in the British Museum

LIFE OF FREDERICK WILLIAM

THE GREAT ELECTOR OF BRANDENBURG

BY

C. EDMUND MAURICE

LONDON: GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD.
RUSKIN HOUSE, 40 MUSEUM STREET, W.C.1

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	INTRODUCTION	9
I.	FROM BIRTH OF ELECTOR TO HIS FULL ENTRY ON HIS WORK, 1620–1643	23
II.	FROM BEGINNING OF HIS ADMINISTRATION TO HIS MARRIAGE, 1643–1646	33
III.	FROM THE ELECTOR'S MARRIAGE TO THE SETTLEMENT OF THE DUTCH PEASANTS IN BRANDENBURG, 1646–1649	44
IV.	THE WESTPHALIAN CONGRESS—ELECTOR'S INTERNAL REFORMS 1645 TO ABOUT 1651. .	51
V.	WAR WITH NEUBURG—CAREER OF WALDECK—FINANCIAL REFORMS—STRUGGLE WITH POLAND TO PEACE OF WEHLAU, 1651–1657 . . .	60
VI.	FURTHER FINANCIAL REFORMS—STRUGGLES WITH SWEDEN AND POLAND TO THE PEACE OF OLIVA, 1657–1660	76
VII.	EDUCATIONAL AND OTHER INTERNAL REFORMS, 1660–1668	89
VIII.	QUESTION OF POLISH SUCCESSION—REMONSTRANCES OF THE ELECTOR ABOUT THE HUGUENOTS—TURKISH WAR—TREACHERY OF LEOPOLD—ALLIANCE OF THE ELECTOR WITH FRANCE—DEATH OF THE ELECTRESS, 1660–1666 . .	93
IX.	RELATIONS WITH SWEDEN—DEFENCE OF BREMEN—AGGRESSIONS OF FRANCE—ELECTOR'S RELATIONS WITH THE ESTATES OF CLÈVES—POLISH ELECTION—NEW ALLIANCE WITH FRANCE—TRIPLE ALLIANCE BETWEEN ENGLAND, HOLLAND, AND SWEDEN, 1666–1668 . . .	104
X.	FROM TRIPLE ALLIANCE TO DEATH OF DE WITT, 1666–1672	108

CHAPTER PAGE

XI. STRUGGLES OF THE ELECTOR WITH THE ESTATES OF CLÈVES, AND OF PRUSSIA—EXECUTION OF KALKSTEIN—NEW AGGRESSIONS OF FRANCE—OPPOSITION OF LEOPOLD TO FREDERICK WILLIAM—WAR WITH FRANCE—TREATY OF VOSSEM, 1666–1673 112

XII. NEW AGGRESSIONS OF LOUIS—WAR IN ELSASS (ALSACE)—TREACHERY OF LEOPOLD—DEATH OF CARL EMIL—INVASION OF BRANDENBURG BY SWEDEN—DIFFICULTIES OF THE ELECTOR—RATHENOW AND FEHRBELLIN—EXPULSION OF SWEDES FROM POMERANIA—PEACE OF NIMWEGEN, 1673–1679 123

XIII. SCHWERIN'S MISSION TO ENGLAND, 1673–1678. 136

XIV. CONTROVERSY WITH LEOPOLD ABOUT SILESIAN DUCHIES—VICTORY OVER SWEDEN—DE RÉBENAC—FRANCE IN CLÈVES—TREATY OF ST. GERMAIN—ELECTOR'S GROWING POPULARITY AT HOME—HIS REFORMS—BENJAMIN RAULE—SOUTH AFRICAN TRADE SCHEMES AND THEIR EFFECT—A BRANDENBURG FLEET AND ITS ACTION—TREATY WITH NEGROES—EAST INDIA COMPANY, 1673–1678 150

XV. NEW DIFFICULTIES WITH GERMAN PRINCES—NEW TURKISH WAR—THE ELECTOR AND THE KING OF FRANCE—SOBIESKI'S VICTORY, 1679–1682 160

XVI. ELECTOR'S ATTITUDE TO GERMAN PROTESTANTS AND TO FRANCE—HIS IMPROVED POSITION IN CLÈVES—HESITATIONS ABOUT FRANCE—LOUIS RECONCILES FREDERICK WITH HIS FATHER—MARSHAL SCHOMBERG—FURTHER FRENCH AGGRESSIONS—ELECTOR'S HELP TO WILLIAM OF ORANGE—ILLNESS AND DEATH . . . 171

XVII. ESTIMATE OF FREDERICK WILLIAM'S WORK—COMPARISON OF HIM WITH HIS SUCCESSORS . 179

INDEX 189

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INTRODUCTION

Few Englishmen have realized the immense and disastrous changes produced in Germany, and therefore in Europe, by the destructive effect of the Thirty Years' War. Before that war, Germany was, in the main, a combination of princes who were inheritors of somewhat old traditions, and of free towns proud of their independent life, owing allegiance to an elective Emperor, who, though German in feeling and language, claimed to carry on the semi-sacred traditions of the revived Roman Empire of Charles the Great.

By the end of the Thirty Years' War this great Empire had become, speaking generally, a mass of small States, which had been, in many cases, carved out by military adventurers; while the Empire was gradually passing completely into the hands of the Hapsburg Dynasty, separated from a great part of the old rulers of Germany by its zeal for the Roman Catholic creed; and separated from all German tradition by its reliance on populations, in many cases, absolutely hostile to Germany.

And this confused, disunited Germany was

threatened on the South by the growing power of France, and on the north by Sweden, whose King had originally intervened in Germany to unite and protect German Protestants, but whose later rulers were as dangerous to German unity and freedom as even Louis XIV could be.

It was to such a Germany as this that Frederick William of Hohenzollern returned, in 1640, from his exile in Holland, to take up possession of his Electoral principality of Brandenburg and the provinces connected therewith.

But the difficulties mentioned above were not the only ones with which the young Elector had to contend.

Brandenburg had become an object of alarm and distrust, not only to the Roman Catholic Emperor, but to his Lutheran rivals. The Electors of Saxony had lost the old patriotic spirit of Frederick the Wise and John Frederick the Steadfast, and had become far more zealous for their own leadership of the German Protestants than for the general welfare of Germany.

The Hohenzollern in particular they disliked, both as Calvinists and as dangerous rivals in the leadership of Protestant Germany; and they had seized the opportunity of the contest about the Clèves-Jülich succession to assist the Emperor in enforcing against Brandenburg the ban of the Empire. So bitter had this rivalry between the two great Protestant creeds

become, that Christian William of Hohenzollern who had succeeded to the Episcopal territory of Magdeburg, insisted on separating it completely from the other parts of the family lands; while the Saxons in 1620 formed a union, nominally to protect the upper Saxon circle, but, as many of its critics perceived, to act as an anti-Calvinist League. The Margrave of Jaegerndorf, another Hohenzollern prince, was deprived of his territory and put under the ban; the Austrians seized on the Brandenburg fiefs in Silesia and Lausitz; and the Bohemian and Silesian women and children were forbidden by the Emperor to take refuge in Brandenburg.

When George William of Hohenzollern, the father of the Great Elector, succeeded to the Electorate, he increased the hostility against his family, already felt by the Lutherans, by marrying a sister of the Elector Palatine.

George William was, as we see, placed in the most unfortunate position which a Protestant ruler could have occupied at such a period; but nevertheless, when all excuses have been made, we are, I think, compelled to admit that few weaker and more unstable princes have ever tried to guide a State in an important crisis. And, like so many weak men, he soon fell under the overwhelming influence of an utterly unscrupulous adviser. Count Schwarzenberg, like so many nobles of the time, saw in the confused conditions of the country, an admirable chance of securing

new powers for himself; and perhaps, as has been suggested, for carving out an independent principality from the ruins of the old Germany.

But his only chance of gaining these advantages lay in supporting the power of the Emperor; and having found in George William of Brandenburg a suitable tool for his purposes, he steadily set himself to bind the Elector to the Imperial cause, and to counteract any other influences that would have led him in a different direction.

Perhaps one of the most curious signs of George William's infatuation was, that when Henry Frederick Prince of Orange offered to arbitrate between George William and the Count of Neuburg, about their respective claims to the Clèves-Jülich inheritance, George William preferred to leave the dispute to be settled by Schwarzenberg, although it was generally believed that Schwarzenberg had been bribed by the Count of Neuburg.

Yet even Schwarzenberg could not wholly destroy the Protestant feeling of the Elector; and that feeling was strengthened by the marriage of his sister to Gustavus Adolphus. So in 1624, when Schwarzenberg was away on the Rhine, George William invited his brother-in-law to invade Germany. The King of Sweden was, at the time, engaged in a struggle in Poland; and the chief result of George William's appeal was to rouse the jealousy of the King of Denmark, who at once invaded the lower Saxon Circle.

The Elector refused to accept Denmark as a champion of German Protestantism; and he preferred to help Gustavus Adolphus against Poland.

At once the fury of the German Roman Catholics against the Elector of Brandenburg broke out in new violence. The Emperor stirred up the Elector of Bavaria to lay claim to Pomerania, and even to the Neumark of Brandenburg; and he further demanded that George William should recognize the absorption of the Palatinate by Bavaria. At the same time, Magdeburg revolted altogether from the Hohenzollern family, and chose as their administrator the second son of the Elector of Saxony. George William persuaded himself that, under the circumstances, his only chance was to remain neutral. Unfortunately, this course proved to be the most fatal mistake. Mansfeld, the unscrupulous soldier of fortune, who had identified himself with the Protestant cause, saw in the Elector's weakness an admirable opportunity for violence. And, while he was committing every kind of cruelty in one part of Brandenburg, the Elector of Saxony and Wallenstein broke into the country on the other side. More alarming still to the Elector was the attitude of his brother-in-law, Gustavus Adolphus. In 1626 the King of Sweden took advantage of George William's former appeal, and advanced into Prussia, calling on the Prussians to rise in defence of the Protestant Cause. But the Elector's evil genius, Count Schwarzenberg, had again secured his influence

over his hesitating victim; and the Elector was said to have announced his opinion in these words: "I do not see any other course than to support the Emperor. I have only one son; if the Emperor remains, I and my son remain Electors, if we turn to the Emperor; and what does the common cause concern me if I lose all my honour, reputation, and temporal welfare?" It is true that this exact utterance rests on the authority of Schwarzenberg; and it is probable that the Elector did not express his feelings with quite such cynical frankness. But substantially these remarks must have indicated his state of mind.

In vain his Chancellor Pruckmann warned him against the alliance with the Emperor Ferdinand, and held up to him the example of John Frederick the Steadfast of Saxony. Schwarzenberg thrust such advisers contemptuously aside, and even persuaded (or should we say compelled?) the Elector to supply food to Wallenstein's invading army, without demanding any payment in return.

The difficulties of George William were much increased by the bitter tone of the Brandenburg Lutherans, who threw all the blame of the opposition to Ferdinand on the Calvinism of some of the Elector's Councillors, and warned him that the Emperor would crush both Lutherans and Calvinists, if he were opposed.

Schwarzenberg now felt his position so secure, that he denounced Winterfeld, one of the honestest of the

Elector's Councillors, and had him imprisoned; while Bruckmann and Goltz were brought into complete disfavour. He further pressed on the Elector the necessity of acting openly with Poland against Sweden. Neither George William nor his subjects were inclined to so gross a breach of faith, or to such decided action; and when Schwarzenberg contrived to secure a contingent of the Brandenburg troops, they laid down their arms on the first encounter with the Swedes. At the same time the Dutch Republic, alarmed at George William's servility to Schwarzenberg, suddenly sent troops into Clèves to occupy certain towns there, under the pretext that these towns were held as a pledge for the payment of a debt due to the Dutch. The most indignant of all the Elector's critics was, not unnaturally, his brother-in-law, Gustavus Adolphus. He had been, as it will be remembered, invited by the Elector into Germany as early as 1624, and when his actual invasion took place in 1630, he had some right to suppose that George William would support him. He was greatly irritated therefore at finding that the Elector desired still to maintain a neutral position. "My brother-in-law," said the King, "must be either my friend or my enemy."

Under these circumstances, George William listened to the advice of those of his Councillors who urged him to form a middle party by allying himself with Saxony. Acting on this advice the Elector of

Brandenburg, in December 1631, summoned a meeting of the Protestant princes of the Leipzig Convention. But, when they came together, they showed much more interest in asserting their claims to the revenues of the Episcopal lands, which the Emperor had commanded them to restore, than in the general welfare of Germany or of Protestantism.

In the meantime the war was raging fiercely, and Tilly was advancing on Magdeburg. George William would not allow the King of Sweden to pass through his dominions to the rescue of the unfortunate city; and the Leipzig Convention showed itself equally indifferent to its fate. So, when Gustavus Adolphus at last offered terms which satisfied George William, it was too late to save the city, and Tilly was enabled, not only to capture it, but to perpetrate there the most horrible massacre of the war.

It was in vain that Gustavus Adolphus appealed to the German Protestants to unite among themselves and defend their own cause, and promised them that he would most willingly withdraw from Germany, if they would defend it. The Elector of Saxony did indeed send a contingent to support the Swedes at the battle of Breitenfeld; but they ran away from Tilly's attack, and left the Swedes to win the victory without them. Yet, when the Swedish career of victory was at its height, the same Elector of Saxony offered to secure to the King of Sweden the crown of the Holy Roman Empire. Such a proposal was by no means

to Gustavus Adolphus's taste, though he wished, by temporary occupation of Pomerania, to secure a place for Sweden in the Councils of the Empire, which should hinder the growing power of France.

Perhaps the strangest phenomenon in that part of the story with which we are specially concerned is the continuance of the power of Schwarzenberg over the mind of George William, even when the victories of the King of Sweden seemed to have thoroughly discredited the pro-Austrian policy.

So feeble did the Elector of Brandenburg show himself under this influence, that his royal brother-in-law said of him that a new livery, a fine horse, or a pack of hounds would drive anything else out of George William's head.

The death of the great King of Sweden in the battle of Lützen, in November 1632, finally cut short all hopes of any honourable results from the Thirty Years' War ; and in 1633 Schwarzenberg returned in triumph to Berlin. Wallenstein's attempts to make an alliance with the Protestants, in order to check the Bavarian and Spanish influences in Germany, were cut short by the murder of that intriguing general at Eger ; and the defeat of the Swedes at Nordlingen in 1634 put a permanent check on the Swedish advance in the Empire.

George William vainly struggled to hold to his old Protestant principles. He protested against a peace which did not restore the Elector Palatine to his

rights, or do justice to the services of Sweden to the Protestant cause, or settle the Clèves-Jülich inheritance. But, as Schwarzenberg had been too strong for his unfortunate tool, even in the life of the great and victorious King of Sweden, he found it easier still, in the new circumstances, to crush the Elector's feeble protests. He was resolved that the Brandenburg troops should be completely incorporated in the Imperial army, and that Frankfort and Landsberg should be handed over to Ferdinand; nor would he obtain any security for the Elector's rights in Clèves or Prussia.

The growing strength of the House of Austria, coupled with the wide-spread desire for peace, made it more and more impossible for sincere German Protestants to gain a hearing; and the treacherous and selfish attitude of the Elector of Saxony weakened still more their unfortunate position. George William, in his hope to rescue Prussia from Polish rule, consented to place his forces under the Elector of Saxony; but this made impossible any common action with Sweden, for John George of Saxony declared war on that country; and, when the Pomeranians appealed to Brandenburg for protection, George William could only prescribe his favourite recipe of neutrality.

Again the Emperor Ferdinand and Schwarzenberg forced the unfortunate Elector into their service against Sweden. The joint forces were defeated by the Swedish general, and the cruelties committed by

the Emperor's troops were so great, that not only did the Estates of Brandenburg plead for a speedy peace, but the main body of their people showed a decided preference for the Swedes.

Nevertheless, Schwarzenberg still remained supreme. He forced the Elector into a renewed attack on the Swedes ; he drove the remaining faithful Councillors of Brandenburg into obscurity ; and he actually levied taxes without consulting the Estates. Ferdinand, indeed, pretended to secure Pomerania for George William ; but when in 1637 he succeeded, for a time, in occupying it, he proved by all his acts that he intended to retain it as his own property ; while his troops were left free again to plunder the Brandenburgers.

The death of Bernhard of Weimar in 1639, though it deprived Ferdinand of his most dangerous foe, yet enabled Richelieu to come forward as the inheritor of Bernhard's position of protector of the oppressed German States against the tyranny of the Emperor ; and a victory of the Dutch fleet under Van Tromp over the Spaniards quickened Ferdinand's desire for peace. But Schwarzenberg was still bent on a new war with Sweden and on making George William subservient to Poland in all Prussian questions. Indeed, a new campaign against Sweden was actually being organized, when on December 1, 1640, Schwarzenberg's policy received a fatal blow by the death of George William.

It has been the purpose of this introduction to show part at least of the difficulties which hampered the position of the new Elector. It will be the main purpose of the following biography to show how he encountered those difficulties, and how, in spite of unavoidable shortcomings, he well earned the title of GREAT.

Life of Frederick William
the Great Elector of Brandenburg

CHAPTER I

FROM THE BIRTH OF THE GREAT ELECTOR TO HIS FULL ENTRY ON HIS WORK

1620–1643

Frederick William was born in 1620. His father, George William, had, as we saw in the introductory chapter, endeavoured to avoid, as much as possible, the difficulties and dangers of the Thirty Years' War; and while his strong Protestantism was deepened by his sister's marriage with Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, his desire for the union of the Holy Roman Empire under German rule, and his fear of offending the Emperor Ferdinand, had led him to shrink from too close an alliance with his powerful brother-in-law. This hesitating policy had greatly weakened his position in Germany, and had given his overbearing minister, Count Schwarzenberg, undue influence. Schwarzenberg relied rather on the Emperor than on

the Elector for his authority, and while he won great profit out of his office, he filled the army with men of various nationalities who felt little loyalty to the Elector of Brandenburg. On the other hand, George William's wife, the sister of the unfortunate " Winter King " of Bohemia, must have drawn her boy's sympathies, at an early age, to the cause of the anti-Imperialist Protestants ; and this influence must have been deepened by her readiness to sacrifice herself for her son. An early visit to his aunt, the wife of Gustavus Adolphus, tended further to deepen his boyish enthusiasm for Protestantism.

The difficulties and dangers of his father's position were early impressed on Frederick William by his removal from one place to another for the sake of his personal safety ; and these changes came to a climax when, at the age of fifteen, he was at last sent to Holland, even though this move caused much difficulty, and the Electress stinted herself in food in order to raise the money for his journey. Werner von der Schulenburg, a friendly young nobleman, was sent with Frederick William by his own request, and an ardent Calvinist guardian named Leuchtmann superintended his studies. Under Leuchtmann's guidance Frederick William studied in the University of Leyden, where he acquired considerable knowledge both of languages and physical science. But perhaps his strongest interest at this time was in military tactics, and he went to the camp at Schenkenschanz,

where his kinsman Henry Frederick of Orange was carrying on the struggle against Spain.

From the camp the future Elector went on to the Hague, and it was there that he underwent a remarkable experience, which much impressed both himself and his friends.

A number of profligate Dutch nobles invited the German lad to attend a meeting of their "Midnight Society." Werner von der Schulenburg warned Frederick William of the character of the men who had invited him; but boyish curiosity was strong in him, and he refused to believe that any ill was intended. When, however, he was seated at the table, he soon perceived the nature of the orgies which he had been invited to share. He started up, declaring that he must leave the Hague at once; and in spite of his extreme youth, he was so determined that no one dared to hinder him. He hastened back to the camp, where the Prince of Orange greeted him with the words, "My dear cousin, your flight has shown more courage than I should show if I took Breda. He who can learn so early to control himself will accomplish something great."

Nor were these the only lessons which the young visitor learnt in Holland. The importance of the development of trade and the advantages of a navy were realized by the Dutch more fully than by most European States; and these were noted as future elements in the greatness of the Brandenburg

Electoral States. At the same time, the whole bias of his boyhood and early youth was in the direction of a rather stern Protestantism, which led him to look with special suspicion on the House of Austria, whose hold over their German subjects had been in some ways strengthened by the Thirty Years' War. His aunt, the unfortunate Queen of Bohemia, strengthened him in his Protestant feeling ; and she even hoped to bind him to her still more closely by arranging a marriage between him and a member of her own family. All these tendencies alarmed Schwarzenberg, whose whole policy was directed to strengthening the interest of the Emperor, and he urged the recall of Frederick William to Berlin.

Distrusting Schwarzenberg, and anxious to escape from pro-Austrian influences, the young prince suggested that, instead of returning to Berlin, he should be appointed to the Governorship of Clèves, which was the province nearest to Holland and most remote from Berlin influence. Schwarzenberg succeeded in defeating this proposal, and urged on his side that Frederick William should be betrothed to an Austrian Princess. But, for all his youth, Frederick William seems already to have acquired some diplomatic gifts ; and he succeeded in making delays, which hindered his return for a year and a half, and apparently counteracted the proposal for an Austrian alliance.

At last, however, in 1638 he was forced to come to

Berlin. Schwarzenberg disguised his dislike and distrust by a very splendid welcome to the future Elector, and invited him to dinner. But the young man's suspicions of the powerful minister were only increased by this reception, and he even attributed an illness which followed the dinner to an attempt of Schwarzenberg to poison him. Although this suspicion is considered unjust by careful historians, there is no doubt that Schwarzenberg used all his influence to keep the young heir from all share in the government of the Electoral provinces. George William, as usual, weakly yielded to his powerful minister, and even increased Schwarzenberg's power by large grants of land. In spite, however, of this attempt to carry out his Imperialistic policy, the influence of the Old Elector was not much longer to be allowed to hinder the development of the independence of Brandenburg. He was, in fact, steadily breaking down, and on December 1, 1640, he died, and Frederick William succeeded to the Electorate at the age of twenty.

Already his appearance gave indications of his character, and both attracted and impressed those who saw him. A vigorous athletic figure, strengthened and developed by outdoor exercise, a strong nose and mouth, and very expressive blue eyes, made a combination which could not easily escape notice. But although many historians recognize his learning, public spirit, and deep religious feeling, even friendly

critics have, in some cases, charged him with a tendency to dissimulation in his dealings with opponents. It will be necessary, later on, to examine this question in detail; but, with regard to his relations with Schwarzenberg, I can find no excuse for such an insinuation. That he was cautious, and always on his guard, is clear enough; but it is also clear that each of the contending parties recognized to the full the hostile attitude of his opponent, and no mere forms of courtesy could for a moment be supposed to conceal their real purposes.

At all events, the final phase of the struggle was produced by causes for which the young Elector was in no way responsible. He was, indeed, unwilling to deprive the powerful minister at once of his offices; and so courteous was his tone, that Schwarzenberg was at first persuaded that he could win the support and perhaps the obedience of the son of his former tool. The first disillusionment came when he found that the Elector was resolved to prohibit the further progress of the proposed campaign against Sweden. In this step Frederick William was backed by the earnest appeal of the Estates of Brandenburg, who implored him to consider the state of the country and its unfitness for war, significantly adding that they hoped he would not any longer leave the country subjected to absolute domination. The Elector readily promised agreement with these remonstrances, and it was in vain that Schwarzenberg tried to raise a

panic about the supposed advance of the Swedes on Berlin.

It was not to be expected that the arrogant minister would yield without a struggle ; and he persuaded the officers of the army to refuse to take the oath of allegiance to the new Elector, as they only owed homage to the Emperor. Thereupon Conrad von Burgsdorf seized Cüstrin into his hands, and advised the arrest of certain colonels, whom he accused of treason to the Elector.

While Frederick William approved Burgsdorf's action, he desired as far as possible to conciliate Ferdinand ; and he sent a messenger to Vienna with the message that he would not make peace without informing the Emperor ; and that he hoped for the Emperor's help in enforcing the claims of Brandenburg on Pomerania. At the same time, he recalled to his councils the men whom Schwarzenberg had driven from power, and demanded that the ministers should consult a new Privy Council (formed by the Elector) in all public questions.

Ferdinand was by no means reconciled to the new Brandenburg policy by the Elector's conciliatory words ; and he sent orders to the officers of the Brandenburg forces that they should keep their troops together, and not consent to any reduction of their numbers.

He seems to have hoped for some decided stroke from Schwarzenberg, but the arrogance of the once

overbearing minister had been greatly checked by the vigorous action of Burgsdorf, the steady opposition of Frederick William, and the unexpected readiness of the officers of the Brandenburg infantry to take the oath of allegiance to the new Elector. He was further alarmed by the repeated summonses to Königsberg which he received from Frederick William, and by the news of the Elector's indignation at his refusals to obey the summons.

Moreover, like many overbearing men, Schwarzenberg continued to offend many of those whom it was most to his interest to conciliate. He had provoked great unpopularity by ordering the burning of an important faubourg of Berlin (Cölln), under the pretext that the Swedes were intending to seize it, and he offended some of his soldiers by delays in their payment, which nearly provoked a mutiny.

Under this combination of difficulties Schwarzenberg's health broke down; a quarrel between two pages at his own table brought on a sudden shock, and in March 1641 he died, as the doctors declared, *ex moerore animi, et perturbatione sensuum* ("from grief of mind and disturbance of his feelings"). The distrust which Frederick William had felt for his father's too powerful minister was so well known that the rumour was spread that Schwarzenberg had been secretly executed.

The Elector at once appointed his cousin, the Margrave Ernest von Brandenburg Jaegerndorf, to

the office lately held by Schwarzenberg ; and backed by the Estates, he had already begun to dismiss the unnecessary troops and to demand an account from the officers of their unjust extortions from the citizens. The officers refused to give an account of their proceedings to the civil authorities, and one of them declared that he would blow up the fortress of Spandau rather than surrender it. At the same time, the Emperor and the Duke of Brunswick urged the Elector to renew the campaign against Sweden, though Ferdinand refused to secure Pomerania to Brandenburg. But the Elector continued to offer peace to Sweden and Poland ; and the Poles consented to the enfeoffment of the Elector with the Polish fief of Prussia, an arrangement which was actually carried out in October 1641. The Swedes were driven by less peaceful means to their concessions. Their forces had committed great cruelties on the Brandenburg peasantry, and it was the rising of these peasants against them that led the Swedes to desire peace. They now offered definite terms of peace to the Elector on July 17, 1641, to be observed for two years.

The Elector's readiness to meet these proposals alarmed both the Emperor and the Duke of Saxony ; and the young Schwarzenberg began to hope that his intrigues might have some effect. But the Estates of Brandenburg, backed by Conrad von Burgsdorf and the Margrave Ernest von Jaegerndorf, denounced the

intrigues of Schwarzenberg and the rebellious officers, and urged the Elector to prosecute Schwarzenberg for attempting to bribe the Margrave Ernest and for slandering the Councillors of the Elector. Frederick William acted at once with the prompt determination which always characterized him. He arrested young Schwarzenberg and dismissed the rebellious officers and soldiers. Unfortunately, Schwarzenberg escaped from his prison and fled to Vienna, where he carried on intrigues against the Elector; and the Margrave Ernest found his position as minister too trying for his strength. He resigned his position and died in October 1642.

The Elector did not appoint anyone to replace his cousin; but he entrusted the management of affairs for a few months to Conrad von Burgsdorf and another friend, on whom he could rely; and then in March 1643 he came to Berlin and undertook the management, both military and civil, of the Electoral domains.

CHAPTER II

FROM THE BEGINNING OF HIS ADMINISTRATION TO HIS MARRIAGE

1643–1646

When the young Elector assumed the full powers of his office, the reform of the army seemed, at the moment, the change which was most necessary to the security of the State, since the plots of the Schwarzenberg party had shown the danger of relying on forces which were not united by a sense of loyalty to the State which they served. But all reforms, whether of the army or the civil government, were hampered by the looseness of the relations between the different provinces of the Electorate and their want of any sense of a common duty.

Nor will this seem strange when we note that, while the Duchy of Clèves and the little province called the Mark, which was nearest to it, were separated by several countries from the Mark of Brandenburg, and while many of the towns of Clèves were still occupied by Dutch garrisons, the province

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of East Prussia, at the other corner of the Electorate, was cut off from part of the dominions of the Elector by a Polish province, and was, for a time, more closely connected with Poland than with Brandenburg. Even Brandenburg itself was divided into the Altmark, the Mittelmark, the Vormark, the Neumark, and the Uckermark ; and the separation between these districts was increased by the intrusion of the Archbishopric of Magdeburg between some of them.

In the early days of Frederick William the most pressing difficulties arose from the complicated relations between Brandenburg, Prussia and Poland. During part of the Middle Ages, the Teutonic knights had carried on a military crusade for the conversion of the heathen Prussians, a Slavonic race, who for a long time held their own against the German invaders. In the seventeenth century the Elector of Brandenburg had been chosen Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights ; and in 1618 he used that position to annex the fertile province of East Prussia to the somewhat barren district covered by the Mark of Brandenburg. Besides the discontent roused in the native population by this annexation, the Elector found that he had another difficulty to reckon with in the rivalry of the powerful King of Poland, who claimed the whole province of Prussia, and who would only allow the Elector of Brandenburg to hold East Prussia as a fief from Poland. This claim of the King of Poland was eagerly recognized by the Prussians, who had received

very harsh and unjust treatment from the Teutonic knights during their long struggle. Indeed, it may be said that the knights had practically reduced them to slavery.

At the same time it should be noted that, by joining the Hanseatic League, some of the Prussian towns had secured their practical freedom ; and their inhabitants were allowed to move about more freely than the other subjects of the Teutonic Order. Moreover, the knights and free peasants held meetings in their districts. Nor were the Teutonic invaders always able to enforce completely the subjection which they tried to establish over the less privileged classes. The chances of war sometimes turned against the conquerors ; and, after a great defeat at Tannenberg, the want of money compelled the Teutonic Order to allow their subjects the right of self-taxation, and to sanction for the more powerful of them the formation of meetings of Estates. But the Prussians soon found that the concessions won by force were withdrawn as soon as the conquering race recovered its strength, and the treachery of the invaders naturally caused the weaker party to look for a protector. Hence it was that they were eager to secure the help and to recognize the authority of the King of Poland ; and so from 1540 to 1617 a kind of Prussian constitution was founded under the control of the Poles.

It is important to keep this previous history in mind, if we would make due allowance for that policy

of the Prussian Estates, which must often seem narrow-minded in aim and reactionary in effects. Moreover, George William, the father of the Great Elector, had been eager to remain on good terms with the King of Poland and the Prussian nobles; the latter he even encouraged to assert their power against the Towns, who were the other chief Estate of the Prussian Assembly.

Thus, then, Frederick William, when he succeeded to the Electorate, was confronted in Prussia by men full of racial antagonism, quickened by the memory of former tyranny and injustice, strengthened by the zeal for aristocratic privileges, and backed by a powerful Slavonic State, in which the Roman Catholic hostility to a German Protestant ruler was hardly stronger than that felt by the Prussian Lutherans to the Calvinist Elector.

The new Elector, while much clearer in his aims, and infinitely stronger and more consistent in his action than his father had been, was yet faced by three apparently discordant duties. On the one hand he desired to respect all clearly proved legal privileges, and he even declared that "when Privileges are not misused or wrongly expounded they are an ornament to the country, and a support of good order." And in his testament to his son and heir, he impressed on him the duty of observing promises made to the Roman Catholics of Clèves, though he evidently shrinks from the thought of any possible growth of

Romanism. Secondly, while this very legal feeling leads him to give the preference to the nobles as possessors of the most clearly defined privileges, his sense both of justice and policy drives him at a somewhat later date to defend the cause of the towns against the nobles; and his humanity and growing perception of certain forms of tyranny make him, in some cases, the champion of the oppressed peasantry.

But, on the other hand, the Elector felt that the State which he had undertaken to guide could only be saved by unity. This need for common action was especially illustrated by the ruinous condition of many of the towns throughout the Electorate. In Berlin (Cölln) only a third of the inhabitants had been left alive, while the destitution had become so great that, after feeding on dogs and cats, some men in their desperate hunger had actually eaten their dead neighbours. Other towns had been burnt and the farms laid waste; while the lawless tyranny of the invading armies had produced a general recklessness of life. Wholesale robberies were common among the peasantry who, in their turn, suffered from the harsh cruelty of the nobles. Moreover, it must be remembered that the Thirty Years' War was still raging. The Emperor and the Swedes were tearing the country to pieces between them; and the Hessians were laying waste the territories near the Brandenburg provinces.

A Brandenburger summed up the situation, shortly

before George William's death, in these words: "If the Elector dies, his successor will have need of God's help. Pomerania is lost; Prussia we hold like an eel by the tail; and, as to the Marks, they talk of selling them. Perhaps we shall have a lord with no lands."

But in spite of these gloomy forebodings, the Elector held his own against his most determined foes, and the victories of the Swedes and French compelled the Emperor to take a more conciliatory attitude; while the successes of Frederick William against the Hessian invaders were so marked that the Landgrave of Hesse was compelled to sign a peace in 1644; and, though some of the Hessian generals opposed the evacuation and continued to commit acts of violence, the Landgrave remained faithful to his treaty; and in 1645 the evacuation of Clèves was completed, the Dutch at the same time withdrawing from Duisburg and Dinslaken. These successes gave new hope to the Elector in his first efforts towards founding a national Brandenburg army. But to give time for that work and for the reorganizing of his internal affairs, it was necessary to make advances to the one hostile Power from whom he might have reason to hope for some sympathy and concessions. His old enthusiasm for the late King of Sweden, Gustavus Adolphus, had not died out; and his aunt, Gustavus's widow, encouraged the plan of an alliance between Frederick William and his cousin Christina. Unfortunately, the Queen Dowager was not receiving the respect which

the widow of so great a king might have claimed, and the powerful Swedish minister, Oxenstierna, was opposed to a match which might weaken his influence at Court. As for Queen Christina herself, it does not seem clear what her exact feeling towards her cousin may have been ; the only record of any expression of her feeling which I have discovered is that she described her cousin as " the little ' Burgomaster.' " But the proposals of the Elector, though not much encouraged at Stockholm, were sufficiently notorious to arouse the fears and jealousy of the King and Diet of Poland, and they addressed remonstrances to him.

On this occasion, again, the charges of falsehood and double-dealing have been made against Frederick William. But it is surely probable that the denial that anything was *settled* may have been interpreted by the Polish emissaries as a denial that anything was *proposed* ; and the behaviour of the Swedish troops in the Pomeranian territories may have well justified the Elector in throwing doubts on the probability of a friendly understanding between Brandenburg and Sweden.

In the meantime, the resistance of the Prussian nobles to the taxes demanded of them by the Elector for the formation of a national army was rousing him to stronger measures, especially as the more distant province of Clèves was at the same time stirred up against him by the intrigues of the Schwarzenberg party.

The Elector had desired to recognize the rights of the Estates in the matter of self-taxation; but he considered that the need of consolidating his forces was so great that in this very year, 1643, which was to begin his work of reorganization of his State, he levied taxes both in Prussia and in Clèves against the wish of the Estates, and forcibly quartered soldiers on the citizens of Clèves.

In order to understand all sides of the Elector's relations with the Estates of Prussia it is necessary to refer to another aspect of this question, which will be dealt with more fully at a later time. During his residence at Leyden University, Frederick William had acquired a great zeal for learning and especially for scientific studies. The promotion of these studies necessitated a much wider outlook in his choice of professors than the savage and narrow Lutheranism of his Prussian subjects would allow them to accept; and the town of Königsberg, which held a leading position among the cities of Prussia, was furious in its resistance to the Elector's desire to promote a good understanding between Lutherans and Calvinists.

Christian Mysleuta, the son of a Polish nobleman, had led the opposition to Frederick William, and when the death of one of Mysleuta's followers gave the Elector an opportunity to recommend as a preacher in Königsberg, Christian Dreier, a more moderate theologian, the Estates of Königsberg tried to resist the appointment. The Elector, however, succeeded

not only in securing Dreier's appointment, but in obtaining subsequent promotion for him; and when the Estates of Königsberg tried to remove a moderate professor from the University, Frederick William again defeated their attempt.

Unfortunately for his matrimonial projects, the Elector's Calvinism made him as unpopular in Sweden as in Prussia; and in 1645 the difference of his creed from the Lutheranism of Sweden was made one of the excuses for rejecting the proposals of marriage with Queen Christina. It is evident that the Elector's feelings had not been deeply concerned in the matter, for he consoled himself by remarking that the position of King Consort would never have been a very dignified one. It was now for the first time that an attempt was made to secure him as an ally for France. Cardinal Mazarin suggested his marriage with a French princess. But Frederick William felt both religious and political objections to such an alliance, and in spite of his anti-Austrian policy, he did not desire to offend the Emperor.

In order to understand the attitude of Frederick William to the House of Hapsburg it is necessary to realize the threefold position which that House was assuming, and the different points of view from which a German Protestant Prince must necessarily regard that House. As the descendants of Rudolph of Hapsburg, these Emperors might claim to represent the idea of a more orderly Europe and a more united

Germany. As the claimants of the leadership of the Holy Roman Empire, their position was more disputable, both because the Empire, being elective, could not be justly dominated by any one family; while its European position gave the right to outside Powers like France and Sweden to interfere in its concerns; and lastly, as the hereditary head of several Slavonic races, and the ardent champion of the Roman Catholic cause, the Hapsburgs were dangerous alike to German independence and Protestant freedom. All these points of view, which were yet further complicated by the character and policy of individual Hapsburg princes, compelled the young German Protestant Prince to vary his policy towards this great and powerful family in a way which must have seemed to those who considered only one part of this complex arrangement as inconsistent and often even discreditable.

But, though both his anti-Austrian and his pro-German feeling led him to reject in turns the Austrian and French proposals of marriage, it was a stronger feeling than either that finally decided his choice.

In 1646 he returned to his old foster-country, Holland, and renewed his friendship with Henry Frederick of Orange, who was carrying on the policy of his father, William the Silent. Frederick William had seen on his former visit to Holland, Louise Henriette, the daughter of the Prince of Orange; but she had then been a girl of twelve, and it was supposed

that since then she had been strongly attracted to a young French nobleman in the Dutch service. And it is generally believed that she had also been courted by Otto von Schwerin, a Pomeranian noble, who subsequently played so important a part in the politics of Brandenburg. Moreover, at that time, the Queen of Bohemia had desired a match between her young nephew and her daughter; and he had not seemed disinclined to that union. But *that* suggestion had long been rejected, and there was much now to attract the young Elector to the Orange Princess. In this case, at all events, no religious difference would separate the young couple; for Louise had accepted the Calvinistic teaching of her parents, though in a very liberal form; and it is clear that whatever political motives may have strengthened Frederick William's desire for marriage, there soon sprang up a warm attachment between the young people. Henry Frederick, on his part, earnestly desired the marriage, and his feeble health led him to urge that it should be hastened on; so in December 1646 the Elector of Brandenburg was united to Louise of Orange.

provinces of his dominion. The remoteness of Clèves from the other parts, and its exposure to certain attacks of hostile powers, made the inhabitants specially disposed to act for themselves in an emergency and to disregard the general needs of the Electoral State.

This tendency had been strengthened by other circumstances, to which I may have to refer at a later stage of this history. But the closer contact with Holland, which was the result of this marriage with a Dutch princess, naturally induced the Dutch Estates General to repel the request of the Clèves Estates that Holland should use its influence in the promotion of this excessive local independence ; and the appointment of the Dutch Governor, Moritz of Nassau, strengthened the Elector's hands. At the same time the gentle influence of Louise, backed by her wise and pious friend, Otto von Schwerin, persuaded the Elector to modify his often fierce tone in dealing with the Clèves Estates, and tended to promote compromises which for a time softened, though they could not completely remove, the friction between Frederick William and his discontented subjects.

But the Electress's influence was felt in another and even more important part of the Elector's policy.

Ever since he had succeeded to the Electorate, Frederick William had been impressed with the misery and destitution which had been brought on his land by the Thirty Years' War, and especially on the wasted and unoccupied districts which had formerly pro-

duced food for the country. The destruction of the land had not only deprived the peasantry of funds, but had also taken from them much of the spirit and energy needed for carrying out successful cultivation. Under these circumstances, Louise suggested the introduction into the Electoral provinces of some of the vigorous Dutch peasantry, who had contributed so much to the prosperity of their own country.

Schemes were therefore devised for bringing in the new settlers. Special towns were chosen, and a Dutch official, Johann Wyngary, was appointed to superintend the introduction of the Dutch colonists. But money was needed for starting the new cultivators of the land; and when the Elector appealed to the central financial chamber to advance 10,000 thaler for this purpose, the officials declared that no one in Berlin was capable of raising such a sum. The Elector then attempted to appeal to Holland to advance the money; but he now began to experience there that opposition which was afterwards to hinder his work in even more important matters.

The death of the Elector's father-in-law, the Prince of Orange, had weakened the Orange influence in Holland and thrown more power into the hands of the republican oligarchy. The nature and grounds of their opposition to the House of Orange it will be necessary to consider later; it is sufficient here to mention that an extreme love of saving money was a main principle of their policy, and so the support

needed for the new settlers was not forthcoming. But by considerable efforts the Elector succeeded in raising the money needed. He found, however, that it was necessary to encourage the incoming settlers to take up their work of restoring good husbandry to the country by granting them special favours and facilities. They were dealt with as communities rather than as individuals ; they were freed from all taxes and from the services exacted from tenants ; and they were not subject to any landlords ; also they were free to surrender their land, provided they found other Dutchmen to take their places ; and they were allowed to choose representatives to decide all civil disputes. They might gather wood freely from the royal forests ; and they were granted a period of three years for repaying the capital lent them, while a very moderate ground-rent was demanded from them. As they insisted on living near the water, special arrangements had to be made to induce the native peasants to exchange land with them. In some cases the tenancy was even made hereditary. The strong religious feeling of the new settlers necessitated the provision of the services of Calvinistic ministers, to whose salaries they contributed. But in districts where the bulk of the population were Lutherans, the Dutch settlers were called on also to contribute to the support of the Lutheran ministers. Their property was to be conveyed free of duty on transport ; and the schools of the neighbourhood were to be obliged to admit their children.

LOUISE OF ORANGE, FIRST WIFE OF THE GREAT ELECTOR
From a portrait in the British Museum

It could not be expected that, however useful they might prove in the end to the State, such privileges to foreigners would fail to excite opposition among the native tenants ; and the officials, who had profited in many cases by the control of the peasantry, joined the peasants in protesting against the new arrangement. They urged that the time of freedom from payment was too long ; that the remission of duties was too large ; that such good terms might have rather been granted to native settlers, or, at any rate, to Germans ; and that the towns would suffer by the rivalry of the Dutch traders.

The Elector answered that the restoration of lands to cultivation was a gain to the whole country ; that the new-comers had in many cases to pay a higher rent than was required of the native tenantry ; that Germans had been offered a settlement of the kind, but had refused to come ; that the Dutch trade had revived the industries in Brandenburg ; and that only selfish monopolists could object to them.

But in spite of these answers, the rubs between the new-comers and the native peasantry continually necessitated the interference of the Elector for the reconciliation of differences ; and many of the Dutch consented to make money concessions to relieve the burdens of the native peasantry.

These enquiries brought the Elector to a clearer understanding of the grievances which weighed on the peasantry of Brandenburg, for they had been sub-

jected to extortions arising, in many cases, from the exaction of payment in kind in the place of money payments. The Elector at once set himself to redress these grievances in those domains which were immediately dependent on himself; and he announced his intention of letting on regular terms of rent his fisheries and vineyards. This involved a reduction in the number of officials, who had profited by the needs of the peasantry.

Moreover, the Elector decided to remove the restrictions which had hitherto confined certain lands to men of a certain rank; and he declared that he would accept as tenants any who proved themselves honourable and intelligent managers. The tenants were at the same time allowed the value of their improvements, the right of collecting wood for fuel, and acorns for pigs. They were freed from personal service to the Elector, and the cattle and wool were secured to the tenant free from the duties which had hitherto been paid to officials, while if the tenant died before the expiry of the lease, his heirs were to be free either to accept or to repudiate the agreement which he had made, provided that due notice was given of the intention to repudiate. At the same time, the right of the officials to seize the horses of the peasants for their own rides and drives was taken away.

These reforms were by no means easy to carry through, and the various difficulties and obstructions to these and other domestic changes will have to be considered at a later period of this history.

CHAPTER IV

THE WESTPHALIAN CONGRESS—ELECTOR'S INTERNAL REFORMS

1645 TO ABOUT 1651

It is now necessary to turn from the domestic affairs of Brandenburg to the attempted settlement of Europe, which arose out of the Thirty Years' War. The German States were thoroughly exhausted ; and the desire for peace showed itself in the summoning of the Congress at Münster. But the passions and ambitions roused by the war were not easily to be quenched by discussion ; and there were two important questions on which the Elector found himself in opposition to the Emperor, and ill-supported by those who should have helped him in an emergency.

These were his claim on Pomerania and his championship of religious liberty.

In regard to the first matter, it should be remembered that both the Duke of Pomerania and the Estates of that province had always looked upon the Elector as the heir of the Dukes ; and the death of Duke Boguslav in 1637 had brought the claim into

force. So when the chances of war had led to the conquest of Pomerania by Sweden, George William of Brandenburg hoped that the Emperor would help him to recover his lost territory. But Ferdinand cared more for stirring up discord between Protestant States than for preserving the unity of Germany. At the same time, the leading statesmen of Sweden had abandoned the championship of religious liberty in favour of an aggressive policy, which should strengthen Sweden at the expense of Germany, and Lutheranism at the expense of Calvinism. So Ferdinand informed the Elector of Brandenburg that he must surrender both Pomerania and the Isle of Rügen to the King of Sweden ; and when Frederick William had made his advances to Christina, he found her and her advisers as obdurate on this point as on the more personal question of the marriage.

The bitterness between Lutherans and Calvinists led the Electors of Saxony and Hanover to join the Emperor in his opposition to Frederick William's claim to Pomerania ; while the King and statemen of France were eager to welcome Sweden as an ally in weakening Germany ; and they too saw some gain to Romanism in sowing division between Protestant Powers. It might have been expected, perhaps, that the close relations between Frederick William and the Dutch Republic might have secured the help of the Estates General to the husband of Louise of Orange. But the rivalry between the oligarchical naval party in

Holland on the one side, and the party of the House of Orange on the other, weakened the friendliness of the Estates towards the Elector of Brandenburg ; and the power of Cromwell in England naturally strengthened a party which suspected the Orange family on account of its connection with the Stuarts. Thus, at this important crisis, the most strongly Protestant Powers in Europe were opposed to the Elector ; and Frederick William was so irritated at the opposition of the Dutch that he accused them of being bribed by the Swedes.

The Estates of Pomerania remained faithful to the rightful heir to their territory. But the Swedish statesman, John Oxenstierna, encouraged no doubt by the general opposition to the Elector, denied the right of the Estates to hold any meetings, and steadily opposed not merely the surrender of Pomerania to Brandenburg, but all of the compromises on the subject proposed by Frederick William.

It might, perhaps, have been expected that Ladislaw IV, the King of Poland, would have backed the Elector against Poland's most dangerous enemy and rival ; but the King of Poland was on bad terms with his Diet at this time, and was unable to give any help.

The Estates of Pomerania, however, in spite of the Swedish prohibition, had sent their duly chosen representative to the Westphalian Congress ; and they demanded the complete liberation of their country from Sweden, and indignantly protested

against being disposed of as cattle ; they also called attention to the unjust taxes laid on them by Sweden and to their own formal declaration of union with Brandenburg. The Swedes, apparently alarmed at this pressure, tried to evade the Elector's demands by pointing to other territories which might be offered in compensation for the loss of Pomerania ; but Wittgenstein, the Elector's representative, so fiercely resented this proposal that he nearly came to blows with the representatives of Ferdinand and Sweden. The Hanse towns also, especially Lübeck, stood by the Elector, fearing no doubt the interference of Sweden with their trade ; and the representatives of Stralsund, which had suffered so much from the Swedish invasion, took the same side.

But it is doubtful if even these supporters would have alone sufficed to secure success to any of the Elector's demands had not a new and unexpected ally appeared to help him at the right moment. The variety of the questions which came before the Congress naturally produced continual changes of alliance among the Powers engaged in these deliberations ; and a new opportunity of weakening the power of the Emperor brought the ministers of the French King into friendly relations with the Elector of Brandenburg. The Elector was keenly alive to the necessity of acting with the other Princes of Europe in checking the growing power of the Emperor ; and he strongly insisted that all the Estates of the Empire should be

represented in the Congress. The Emperor, on his side, recognized the probable effect of such an arrangement and strongly opposed it; while the French as eagerly supported it. With his usual diplomatic cunning, Mazarin saw the chance of still further dividing his enemies; and he took occasion to warn the Emperor of the danger of making Sweden too strong by conceding their claims on Pomerania. This suggestion appears to have produced no effect on Ferdinand; but in the end the French influence and the vigorous attitude of the Elector compelled the Swedes to make some concessions. So part of Hinter-Pommern and the episcopal territory of Cammin were ceded to the Elector, in spite of the persistent opposition of the Emperor Ferdinand. At the same time, the episcopal lands of Halberstadt and Minden were conceded to the Elector; and (more important still) the episcopal territory of Magdeburg.

Another circumstance, at this crisis, drew Frederick William yet closer to France and increased his alienation from the Dutch. Gysers de Lier, a Dutch admiral who had served for a time under the Dutch East India Company, quarrelled with the Company and offered his services to Brandenburg and France for the formation of a new company, which should secure to Brandenburg and France a trade with India and South America. The plan broke down at the time; but it gave a hint which, as we shall see later, the Elector was able to make use of more completely;

and at this time it increased the friendliness of the French diplomatists and quickened the suspicions and dislike of the naval party in Holland for the Elector's enterprises. This change of allies seems all the stranger when we remember that the other question which the Elector considered most vital was the greater freedom and equality which he claimed for the Calvinists ; and in this struggle, in spite of the Protestant opposition, he was far more successful than he had been in the Pomeranian claim. The Lutherans, who had the upper hand among the Protestant princes of Germany, had decided to exclude the Calvinists from the benefits of religious toleration, as not being recognized in the Augsburg settlement. The Elector of Brandenburg threatened that, unless the Calvinists were admitted to an equality with the Lutherans, he would not accept the Peace of Westphalia. And he held his ground so firmly that his enemies gave way.[1] Thus, when the treaty of peace was at last signed, he was recognized as the greatest and most consistent champion of Protestant liberty.

The successes gained by Frederick William at the Conference had no doubt been partly due to the progress which he had made in forming a National army. This gain, however, had not been secured without a considerable struggle with the champions

[1] April 13, 1648, seventh article of Congress recognizes equality of Lutherans and Calvinists. October 24th, peace signed.

of separate local feeling. Of these the most important, from many points of view, were the Prussian nobles. Apart from the Imperialistic opposition, to which I have already alluded, there was a desire among the local aristocracy to base the army on feudal principles and to restrict it to native soldiers dependent on the native landholders. Eager as the Elector was to call out a national feeling in his State, he was unwilling to allow himself to be hampered in the choice of soldiers by local prejudices; and he desired to make the army dependent on himself rather than on the Estates. In this struggle he found himself opposed by some whom he had recognized as his friends in his earlier difficulties. Conrad von Burgsdorf, for instance, who had given such vigorous assistance in the overthrow of Schwarzenberg, was nevertheless in full sympathy with the aristocratic feeling of the Prussian nobles. Besides this cause of alienation from the Elector, Burgsdorf had also succeeded in giving special offence to the Electress Louise by the looseness of his life and the roughness of his manners. Her opposition was too strong for him to resist; he was driven from the Court, and his position as military adviser was taken by three generals who were in sympathy with the Elector's plans of reform.

At the same time the Elector was most eager to secure that the taxes which he had been forced to levy should be as little burdensome to the citizens as was

compatible with the raising of the sums needed ; and it was found that the ordinary form of contribution fell as a special burden on the towns, which had suffered so much during the war. Half the houses in some of these towns had disappeared during the war, in others two-thirds, and in some five-sixths ; and the proposed tax would hinder the chances of restoring these houses or improving them when rebuilt.

Under these circumstances, the Elector suggested a plan, which he had learnt in Holland, of laying a tax on consumers, which should affect all equally by removing those privileges which enabled the nobles and landholders to escape taxation. At once the nobles, both ecclesiastical and civil, began to organize an opposition, and tried at first to delay decision by pleading that they had no authority from their constituents to deal with this question. The Elector answered that they should return to their districts and obtain authority. But the nobles only became more clamorous when they returned to the discussion ; and they entreated the Elector not to reduce to the level of citizens and peasants a class of men from whom he had drawn so many important Ministers of State and generals.

On the other hand, the towns were enthusiastic for the new proposals, and declared that the Elector's proposals were inspired by God ; so they entreated their dearest father and Prince to listen to the sighs which came from the towns and villages for the

softening of their troubles. The privileged classes continued their opposition so fiercely that the Elector seemed at one time disposed to yield, at least in part, to their opposition. But the towns protested so strongly, on their side, against any abandonment of the proposals that a plan was at last discovered of meeting the difficulty.

The towns and the nobles had been recognized as distinct from each other in financial contributions; and thus the Elector had the right to concede to the towns the liberty to make their contributions in their own way, irrespective of the decision of the nobles and knights. The result of the new form of taxation surpassed the expectation of the Government. More than 150 houses were restored and new ones built. And this increased prosperity enabled the towns to raise more than the money demanded for the national army.

I have been obliged to anticipate events, by some years, in the final part of this statement; but there can be no doubt that the influence which the Elector was gaining in European affairs was connected with the progress made in his military reforms in his own State. Unfortunately, the objects to which he applied his new military force were not always as helpful to the public good as those to which I have hitherto referred.

CHAPTER V

WAR WITH NEUBURG—CAREER OF WALDECK—FINANCIAL REFORMS—STRUGGLE WITH POLAND TO PEACE OF WEHLAU

1651–1657

THE Peace of Westphalia had been hailed with an enthusiasm which was the natural result of the terrible exhaustion produced by the horrors and ruin of the Thirty Years' War. And a song is preserved, which must have expressed the most deeply-rooted and widespread feeling of the time :

Thank God ! the word is uttered,
The joyful word of peace !
That all the war and murder
Shall lose their arms and cease.
Touch, Fatherland, thy harp strings,
With songs of new-found joy !
And let the glorious chorus
Now every tongue employ.
Raise up thy wearied spirits
To God in joyful cry.
Lord ! all thy love and mercy
Endure eternally ! [1]

[1] Song written for Peace of Westphalia. Taken from Otto Schwebel's *Der Grosse Kurfürst Friedrich Wilhelm.*

Gott lob! Es ist erschollen
Das edle Fried und Freudenwort
Dass nunmehr ruhen sollen
Die Waffen und des Krieges Mord!
Nimm, Vaterland, nun wieder
Dein Saitenspiel hervor
Und singe Freudenlieder
Im hohen vollen Chor
Erhebe dein Gemüte
Zu deinem Gott und sprich,
Herr! Deine Huld und Güte
Bleibt jetzt und ewiglich!

But, along with this pathetic faith in the endurance of peace, there still remained the sense of bitterness provoked by the passions of war; the determination to evade by all possible means the fulfilment of the obligations enforced by the compromises of the settlement. These difficulties proved the truth of the warning which Milton had so recently embodied in his famous question, "What *can* war but endless war still breed?" The Elector, with all his desire for time to develop the peaceful resources of his country, felt continual insecurity from the unwillingness of the Swedes to carry out their part of the treaty, by evacuating the territories ceded to Brandenburg. Indeed, so little had the Westphalian Congress effected towards finally bringing to an end the controversies which it proposed to settle, that a new congress was called at Nuremberg, at which the Swedes endeavoured to suggest new compromises, which the Elector's representatives indignantly rejected. It was not till 1650

that Minden was finally evacuated ; and Magdeburg was still encouraged by the Swedes to refuse to pay homage to the Elector.

Bitterly as Frederick William resented these treacheries, Sweden seemed at the time too strong to be encountered in war. It was a weaker opponent on whom the Elector first wreaked his vengeance. In the settlement of the Clèves inheritance as many disputed points had been left unsettled as in the Congress of Westphalia ; and it was in 1649 that the Chamber of Fiefs at Brussels adjudged the lordship of Ravenstein to the Count of Neuburg, while arranging that the Count should pay a money compensation to the Elector of Brandenburg. But the Elector had the greatest difficulty in securing this money, after repeated applications. And this controversy, like so many at that time, was embittered by religious differences. By an agreement made in 1647 it had been decided that the churches in Berg and Jülich should remain in the same ecclesiastical condition in which they had been in 1609 and 1612. But the Count of Neuburg maintained that the agreement of 1647 had been set aside by the decision of the Congress of Westphalia in favour of the terribly despotic maxim "*Cujus regio ejus religio*," which put each man's religion at the mercy of his prince. The point of the opposition to this settlement lay in the fact that the Counts of Neuburg had exchanged the Protestant religion for the Roman Catholic in 1613, and conse-

quently that they now wished to secure for their new faith the churches which in 1612 were recognized as Protestant. The Emperor had appointed the Bishop of Münster, a determined opponent of Brandenburg, as the successor in the Commission to the Archbishop. Frederick William, not unnaturally, resented this appointment; and he accused the Count of inaugurating a system of persecution of the Protestants in Jülich and Berg.

At the same time the Elector declared that the resistance of the Estates of Clèves and Mark to his authority was due to the Count's action. The Dutch Estates General, losing for a time their personal hostility to Brandenburg in the common zeal for Protestantism, backed the Elector's remonstrances, and even proceeded to reprisals on the Dutch Roman Catholics. The Elector secured a Dutch general, Otto Christoph von Sparr, to command his troops, and then, without waiting to give warning to the Count, he suddenly invaded the territory of Jülich and Berg.

In view of the general condemnation poured out on the Elector for this invasion, it is only fair to note on his side that Droysen (in his *Preusiche Geschichte*, vol. 3) mentions an attack on the Cléve territory by Neuburg before the invasion of Jülich and Berg territory by Frederick William. That the Elector had in any case received considerable provocation from the Count of Neuburg is clear from the whole story; but

it is impossible to ignore the general verdict given, even by his friends, on the Elector's violent action, though perhaps part of that condemnation may have been due to the failure of his attempt.

In short, a general cry of indignation broke out at this first violation of the Peace of Westphalia. The Estates of Brandenburg complained that they had not been consulted, and denounced the expedition. The Protestants of Jülich and Berg would not rise on behalf of the Elector ; and the malcontents in Clèves and Mark drew closer to the citizens of Jülich and Berg, who were opposed both to the Count and to the Elector. The Duke of Lorraine, a wild, lawless adventurer, first helped the Elector, and then turned against him ; while the death of William II of Orange, the Elector's brother-in-law, led to new bitterness with the oligarchical faction, and thus deprived Frederick William of the sympathy of Holland.

The blow which the failure and discredit of this unfortunate adventure inflicted on the Elector necessitated the development of a new policy and the search for new allies. This necessity gave the opportunity to an able and ambitious man, who was to play an important part in the affairs of Brandenburg. This was Georg Friedrich von Waldeck, one of those independent nobles of the Empire, who, in their search for a suitable political position, were attracted to the growing power and prestige of the Elector of Brandenburg.

It will be remembered that Conrad von Burgsdorf had offended the Elector by his support of the claims of the Prussian nobles against Frederick William's policy of national government. He had been temporarily succeeded by Blumenthal, a man of no particular mark, who soon had to yield to the more vigorous and definite plans of Waldeck. Waldeck had taken part in the invasion of Jülich; but his great claim on the Elector's confidence had been the share which he took in reorganizing the State finances. The Elector had such difficulty in raising funds from the local Estates that he had been forced to pledge or sell the Electoral lands, and he had even then found himself in debt. He had tried to introduce a central Board to control the finances, but the power of this Board called out the most vehement opposition from the local officials in each province.

These were the difficulties which Waldeck first set himself to remove. He instituted a special Commission of Finance, which was to prepare a scheme for regulating expenditure. At the same time, he gave to the different members of the Privy Council special work in investigating the financial possibilities, with the duty of reporting at fixed times. But, unfortunately, Waldeck distributed these functions rather on the territorial lines which had already given so much opportunity to local tyranny than on the grounds of general capacity for particular work; and his want of attention to details hindered the effective-

ness of his work. Indeed, all Waldeck's reforms were part of a larger scheme of policy, which aimed at checking the power of the Emperor Ferdinand by an alliance with France and with the Protestant princes of Germany. This policy was made the more attractive by the extreme demands which Ferdinand was beginning to put forward. He claimed the right to introduce his own nominees into the Diet, to limit the Diet to those who held special lands in the Empire, and to levy special taxes on his own account.

All these claims were steadily resisted by the Elector, and he further demanded the recognition of an equality of voting between the Electoral Colleges of the Protestant Electors and those of the Roman Catholics. A compromise accepted on this subject was considered as a triumph for the Protestants ; and the Elector was again recognized as the champion of the liberties of the Germans, and especially of the Protestants. Under cover of the prestige gained by these successes, the Elector succeeded in securing that hold over Magdeburg which had been legally granted him at the Congress of Westphalia, but which the intrigues of Sweden with the Burgomaster of Magdeburg had hitherto prevented Frederick William from securing.

But, important and successful as Waldeck's schemes were in securing the Elector a better position in Germany, it was the question of his relations with Poland and Sweden that was beginning at this time to

have the deepest interest for Frederick William; and here too Waldeck's scheme of French alliance gave a chance of new success. The Polish question had passed of late through several phases, all of special interest to Brandenburg. The weakness of King Vladislaw had enabled Frederick William to take a bold step towards independence. He had, without waiting for the approval of the King or Diet of Poland, abolished the custom duties levied by Poland in Prussia. This change, while weakening the power of Poland, was, naturally, by no means unpopular in Prussia; and Vladislaw, hampered at the time by certain negotiations with France, dared not protest against this resistance to his authority. In May 1648 Vladislaw died; and in the interregnum which followed, the crown was offered to Frederick William. This solution of the Prussian question seemed to have some advantages for the Elector; but he found, after careful enquiry, that a condition precedent to his election would be his acceptance of the Roman Catholic faith.

To such a proposal the Elector indignantly answered that, "if he were faithless to his God, he could not expect his people to trust him." He therefore used his influence to secure the election to the Polish throne of John Casimir, the brother of the late King. This he was the more willing to do as Casimir promised to secure to the Electors of Brandenburg the right of voting in the Polish Diets, to remit

the exaction of personal homage in the investiture of the Dukes of Prussia, to tolerate Calvinists as well as Lutherans, and eventually to remit the tribute from Prussia. So on November 17, 1648, John Casimir had been unanimously elected King of Poland.

But if, for the moment, the relations between Poland and Brandenburg had become more friendly, the Elector's suspicion of Sweden was more profound than ever; and when the Emperor Ferdinand summoned a Reichstag in 1652, Frederick William insisted that before being admitted, as the Swedes desired, to the Imperial Diet, Sweden should carry out the promises about Pomerania which she had made at the Congress of Westphalia.

Ferdinand was in a difficult position. On the one hand, the Spaniards were urging him to form an alliance with Sweden to check the power of the German Protestants. On the other hand, Ferdinand desired to secure the vote of the Elector of Brandenburg for the succession to the Imperial throne of his eldest son Ferdinand. The latter consideration gained the upper hand. Finding the claims of Brandenburg backed by the other Electors of the Empire, Ferdinand declared that Sweden should not be summoned to the Reichstag till she surrendered Hinter-Pommern to the Elector. After a fierce debate the Swedes, in June 1652, gave a promise of evacuation. Frederick William, not unnaturally, recalled the broken promises at Münster, and demanded further securities; but

the other Protestant Electors would not listen to any plea for delay in the election, so Frederick William felt obliged to acquiesce; and on May 31, 1653, Ferdinand was nominated as the future Holy Roman Emperor.

No sooner was the election secured, than Blumenthal (who then represented the Elector at the Reichstag) reported a sudden change in the Emperor's attitude towards the Protestant Electors; and he pressed Frederick William to form a new alliance of the Protestants to check the Emperor's power.

Unfortunately, the Protestant princes, though disliking Ferdinand's tone, were as selfish and narrow-minded in their attitude as they had shown themselves during the Thirty Years' War; and those who still opposed the Emperor were disposed to rely on French (rather than on German) help. Under these circumstances, there was no pressure which was sufficient to induce the treacherous Ferdinand to keep his promises to the Elector of Brandenburg. When Frederick William pressed his claim to the inheritance of Jaegerndorf, Ferdinand answered that the Elector ought to appeal to the Silesian Judges! And, when he was reminded of his promises about Pomerania, he answered that *that* claim should be made rather on the Empire than on the Emperor. Nor did the general claims of the Protestant Electors fare any better with the Roman Catholic Emperor; and finding that they could not obtain from Ferdinand

the equality they desired between the rival Electoral Colleges, the Protestant princes appealed to the Free Towns to decide the question by their votes. Unfortunately, the rights of the Free Towns had been injured, like most other good things, by the Thirty Years' War, and their representatives declined to interfere in the quarrel, on the ground that, though their rights in the Empire were grounded on as strong a basis as those of the Electors and Princes, yet those rights had for a long time past been ignored.

Frederick William then suggested, as a solution of this dispute, that a new Calvinist Elector should be added to the Electoral roll in order to secure greater equality between Protestants and Roman Catholics. Again the hatred of the Lutherans was aroused and, of course, exploited by Ferdinand. So the question was adjourned and left unsettled.

But the controversies between the different denominations were continually being crossed by racial and national controversies; and at this time the Archbishop of Cologne, one of the most extreme representatives of the Roman Catholic party, found himself obliged to appeal to the Elector of Brandenburg, as the champion of German unity, to protect Cologne from the raids of the lawless Duke of Lorraine. The French and Spaniards would indeed have gladly offered their services to the Elector of Cologne and would have found thereby a good opportunity for intervention; but the Archbishop desired none but

German help; and, finding that Ferdinand could not be relied on, he urged Frederick William to come forward. The Elector readily responded, and, in spite of the apathy among the other German princes and the distraction of a Swedish attack on Bremen, he succeeded in repelling the attack of the Lorrainers and capturing one of their fortresses. Ferdinand, finding himself at the time hard pressed by the claim of the princes of Germany for more equal representation in the Diet, decided to use his authority as Holy Roman Emperor to arrest the Duke of Lorraine as a disturber of the peace of the Empire; and Frederick William having reconciled the Archbishop of Cologne with the citizens of that town, who had complained of his tyranny, was able to secure the help of the Archbishop and the Duke of Brunswick in rescuing the free German town of Bremen from the attack of the Swedes. At the same time, the Elector successfully resisted the demands of the Emperor to enforce a special tax on princes called the "Roman Months"; and he also secured a slight concession to the Calvinist Electors. All these struggles tended to show, at the same time, the need of German unity and the untrustworthiness of the Emperor, as the representative of Unity. Waldeck indeed dwelt on the latter point, but ignored the former; and so he in vain endeavoured to draw the Elector into a complete breach with Ferdinand and a close alliance with France and Sweden. But the point on which Waldeck and Frederick William

heartily agreed was the desire to emancipate Prussia from the Polish yoke; and when John Casimir actually laid claim to the throne of Sweden, on the ground of his descent from Gustavus Vasa, Frederick William became alarmed, and listened in a friendly manner to the request of the King of Sweden that he would resist this claim.

Yet he was far from wishing to engage in the war hastily; he did not wish either to break with Poland, or to join in an alliance with Sweden; so he offered his services as mediator between the rival kings.

Casimir's aggressive attitude, however, became more intolerable; and under Waldeck's advice, the Elector, irritated at being excluded from the Polish Diet and at the continued exactions levied on Prussia, finally signed a treaty of alliance in 1655 with Sweden. The Prussian Estates now saw the danger, and voted the money, while the gentle and conciliatory policy advised by the Electress Louise won over even the opponents in Clèves and Mark. Thus fortified by home support, the Elector joined in resistance to Polish aggression.

The union with Sweden was indeed delayed and made difficult by the Swedish attack on Bremen; but, in spite of that cause of bitterness, the Elector and the King of Sweden consented for a time to an alliance; and Waldeck strongly encouraged that step as a means of throwing off the Polish yoke.

The Electress and other members of the Council

maintained the duty of the Elector to support his suzerain, the King of Poland; and the final decision of the Elector was to preserve neutrality for the time in the struggle between Poland and Sweden, while assisting John Casimir to repel an attack of the Cossacks.

But Waldeck still urged his anti-Polish policy; and in 1654 the Elector consented to join Sweden in repelling the attack of Casimir. Nevertheless, when the Poles had been defeated and Warsaw captured, the Elector felt the need of saving Poland from being crushed by Sweden, and he intervened on behalf of the Poles. The Swedes would not listen to his proposals, and the Poles were so indignant at the sympathy which he had shown to Sweden that they answered his attempts at negotiation by violent threats. At the same time they rallied their forces and drove back the Swedes.

Both Charles Gustavus and Frederick William now became alarmed at the growing power and hostility of the Poles; and they united their forces against Warsaw. On this occasion the struggle was fierce and long; and the chief burden of it was borne by the Elector's forces. The battle ended in the complete defeat of the Poles; and a treaty followed in 1656 between Brandenburg and Sweden, by which the Elector was recognized as independent Duke of Prussia. But the Lithuanians, who claimed to be allies and kinsmen of the Poles, made a fierce attack on Prussia; and Frederick William was forced to retreat

to the defence of his own territory, while Waldeck remained to defend the territories which the Elector had conquered in Poland. The King of Sweden now feared to hold out alone against the Polish forces, and retreated to the Vistula. John Casimir, who had fled after the battle of Warsaw, now took advantage of the Lithuanian assistance to join in the invasion of Prussia, and after savage slaughter he carried off 20,000 men and women and sold them as slaves in the Polish markets. The Queen of Poland, Louise Marie, was so much horrified at these cruelties that she befriended the unfortunate women and set them free.

The Estates of Brandenburg, and Schwerin now urged the Elector to make peace with Poland, while Waldeck urged the renewal of the alliance with Sweden. The Elector had found that, in spite of the nominal recognition of Prussian independence, the Swedes were continually making claims which were inconsistent with the liberties of Prussia; and he hesitated to ally himself either with Sweden or Poland, and contented himself with urging the Swedes to come to terms with Poland. For a time, John Casimir refused to listen to any proposals; and a new war broke out. The result was somewhat as before. The Poles were at first overthrown, but then rallied; and the Elector was forced again to retreat to Prussia. Then the influence of France, England and Denmark, and the recollection of his former difficulties finally induced Casimir to yield; and by the Treaty of

Wehlau in September 1657 Poland finally renounced all claim on Prussia and recognized the Elector as an independent Duke.

This led to a closer alliance with Poland, in which Frederick William's policy was strengthened by the support of his wife and Schwerin. Louise, though she had originally welcomed Waldeck as a friend and supporter of the House of Orange, had never reconciled herself to his opposition either to the Emperor or to the King of Poland. The relations of Brandenburg to both those rulers seemed to her to involve certain moral obligations which it was absolutely unjust to ignore ; and she therefore welcomed the new chance of a reconciliation with the King of Poland, given by the Treaty of Wehlau. This treaty was followed by an alliance between Poland and Brandenburg ; and Waldeck, finding his pro-Swedish policy discredited, retired from Brandenburg, and shortly afterwards entered the Swedish service.

CHAPTER VI

FURTHER FINANCIAL REFORMS—STRUGGLES WITH SWEDEN AND POLAND TO THE PEACE OF OLIVA

1657–1660

It will be remembered that Waldeck's first failure had been in the administration of the Brandenburg finances, and that the Elector had been forced to take matters into his own hands in order to secure at once juster treatment of the tenants, better administration of finances, and a weakening of bureaucratic tyranny. But the power of officials is not easy to crush ; and in 1652 a regular reaction set in.

The number of leases which the Elector was able to dispose of began to diminish ; the payment in kind to officials was renewed ; lands released from mortgages were again pledged, and, in short, the old power of the bureaucracy revived.

Several statesmen were appointed, who struggled for a time to reduce the finances and general administration to order and unity. Some of them, like Blumenthal and Tornow, failed, partly from want of technical knowledge, partly from the attempt to

undertake too many sides of the work at once. Otto von Schwerin was always ready to throw himself into the breach, but Karl Breysig, who has dealt most fully with these financial reforms, considers that Schwerin was too gentle with the jobbers, who had to be exposed and dismissed. Raban von Canstein, who seemed to be working vigorously for a time, was himself suspected of peculation, and was condemned to pay a heavy fine.

The Elector's determination to keep authority in his own hands and not to trust too much to any one official, seems sometimes to have irritated the abler and more ambitious of his Councillors ; and it may have really hampered them in this difficult work of financial reform.

At last the Elector discovered that the difficulties did not arise from the unwillingness of suitable tenants to take the land ; but that they were partly due to the demands made on the tenants for the profits gained by the officials, before the arrangements had been made, which handed over to the tenants some of the rights previously possessed by the bureaucracy and for certain private personal expenses incurred by the tenants unconnected with their position as leaseholders. Also it appeared that the tenants had been allowed the power of inflicting considerable injustice on the labourers employed by them, and as the tenants had more interest in getting a good return from the land than the officials had ever felt, they were even

more ruthless in enforcing some of these services than those officials had been. Moreover, the tenants complained that they were not paid for those public duties which the officials had been compelled to transfer to them.

But the great difficulty in carrying out these and similar reforms was the unwillingness of the officials to give a full account of their expenditure ; and it was not till several administrators had been tried and failed that the man was found who at last produced the effective change that was needed.

This was the Freiherr Dodo Yu Inn und Knyphausen. He, like Waldeck, was an independent nobleman in search of work, and was attracted to Brandenburg by the prestige of the Elector. He sent round circulars to all the different authorities demanding the full statement of their accounts. These were sent direct to Knyphausen, and he decided about each set of accounts whether it should be examined in Berlin, or by some local chamber appointed by him. A list of all the lands mortgaged was also required, and an estimate for the coming year.

Knyphausen's great gift was *that* invaluable one of knowing where to find efficient agents ; and thus he was able to found a College of helpers to act under the Central Court and Chamber which all the reformers had been trying to found, but which they had not hitherto been able to bring into good working order. By these vigorous means he was able to secure a full

account of the sufferings of the labourers and to supply their needs ; to transfer to the Elector many dues which had been pocketed by officials ; and to introduce a more efficient system of finance and more humane relations between employer and labourer.

Unfortunately, these schemes were not brought into full operation till after the Elector's death ; and the chief use of mentioning the matter in this place is to show the difficulties in the way of internal reform which hampered a ruler who was continually occupied with the problem of defending the unity and independence both of Brandenburg and Germany from foreign aggression, and the assertion of religious and civil liberty. For, in the meantime, the new relations with Poland had been rousing Frederick William's hopes of recovering his lost territory from Sweden. John Casimir, indeed, was far less friendly to the Elector than was his wife, Marie Louise, who had a genuine admiration for Frederick William, and who persuaded her husband not only to abstain from exacting undue concessions in the new treaty with Brandenburg, but also to grant to the Elector Lauenburg, Bùtow, Elbing, and the Starostie of Draheim as compensations for the losses which he would incur by breaking with Sweden. Other influences were also pressing the Elector into active hostility to Sweden. Denmark, always fearful of the power of Charles Gustavus, was eager to secure the Elector's help in case of need. Spain and Austria, eager no doubt for

hostility between Protestant Powers, urged the Elector to endeavour to recover part of Pomerania. The Duke of Courland, who had married the Elector's sister, was in constant fear of his Swedish neighbour ; and the Electress, guided as usual by Schwerin (who had recovered power on the fall of Waldeck), used all her influence in the same direction. But the Elector refused to be hurried into action.

France, who had again cooled in her opposition, was trying to induce the Elector to join Charles Gustavus in an attack on Denmark. Cromwell was favourable to Sweden as a Protestant Power, and distrustful of the Elector, as connected through the House of Orange with the Stuarts.

Under these circumstances, Frederick William preferred again to act as negotiator between Sweden and Poland ; and Charles Gustavus consented to accept his services in that capacity. The Queen of Poland also inclined to agree with Frederick William that the choice lay between securing the Austrian alliance or establishing a general peace.

In the meantime, the relations between Austria and Brandenburg had been affected by certain peculiar circumstances which seemed likely to have important results. While Frederick William had been chiefly occupied with his Swedish and Polish difficulties, the central point of public interest for most German, French (and to some extent English) political leaders had been the election of the future Holy Roman Emperor.

The eldest son of Ferdinand III, who had been nominated for the succession, under the circumstances above described, had died at an unexpectedly early age ; and Ferdinand was now bent on securing the succession for his second son, Leopold. Mazarin, on the other hand, was eager to support an anti-Austrian candidate ; and he succeeded in winning the help of the Electors of Mainz and Köln, the Count of Neuburg, and even of Cromwell.

The coming marriage of Leopold with the heiress to the Spanish crown, and his alliance with Poland were special causes of alarm to the French ; and they even tried to prove that, in his advances to Spain, Ferdinand had violated the Treaty of Westphalia.

Both parties were eager to secure the support of the Elector of Brandenburg. The Emperor's envoy had the impudence to claim his support for Ferdinand's candidate, on the ground that the Polish alliance with Brandenburg and the freer position of Prussia, were due to Ferdinand's influence. The French, with more justice, pleaded their services in securing the settlement with Sweden in 1655 ; and they reminded the Elector of the injury which Ferdinand had inflicted on him by encouraging the resistance of the Clèves Estates to his authority.

The Chancellor of the Elector of Mainz even suggested that if Frederick William would only turn Roman Catholic, he might himself be elected Holy Roman Emperor. Of course Frederick William

turned a deaf ear to such a proposal ; but he certainly had no reason to congratulate himself on the result of his vote for the younger Ferdinand ; and he now renewed his demand for the surrender of Jaegerndorf and the payment of the Breslau debt.

The alarming victories of Sweden over Denmark, and the consequently threatening attitude of Charles Gustavus towards Prussia, induced Frederick William to hope for some help from Ferdinand. But Ferdinand was again treacherous ; and while pretending to give help to Denmark, he directed his general, Montecuccoli, to delay his advance ; and in the meantime he betrayed Frederick William's plans to the Swedes.

Under these circumstances, the Elector refused to promise his vote to either side till something important had been done to check the Swedish aggressions.

In fact, treacherous as he felt Ferdinand to be, he was still much alarmed at the power of France ; and when Mazarin, finding less support for his candidate than he had hoped, offered to withdraw his opposition to Leopold's election if Leopold would promise not to support the enemies of France, the Elector of Brandenburg declared that he could only support this prohibition if France would pledge herself not to support the enemies of the Empire. Mazarin was alarmed at this counter-proposal, which would make impossible the alliance between France and Sweden ; and the French representative now brought forward a new suggestion, that, if the future Emperor should

violate the capitulations agreed on, the Electors might at once depose him, and elect a new Emperor. Frederick William opposed this proposal; and Ferdinand, alarmed at the demands of Sweden and France, promised to yield to Brandenburg about Jaegerndorf, and to help the Elector to secure better terms about the Clèves election. The Elector once more yielded to his German sympathies and his dread of France, and when Ferdinand's intrigues were cut short by death, Leopold I was elected Holy Roman Emperor, July 18, 1658.

But Leopold, as the Elector was too often to learn, was never to be relied on either for gratitude or fidelity; and the Russians, who were in open hostility to Poland, seized upon and imprisoned the Duke and Duchess of Courland.

In the meantime, Charles Gustavus, having defeated the Danes, thought he saw an opportunity of regaining his hold upon Prussia, and his troops took up such a menacing attitude that the Elector was forced to defy him, and by Schwerin's advice to appeal to German feeling against Sweden. Fortunately for the Elector, Leopold was at this time greatly alarmed at the formation of the Rhine League of German princes; and the Elector recognized that this League, however useful as a check on Leopold's power, was too much under French influence and too Roman Catholic in its tendencies to be a desirable ally for a German Protestant. Thus he was led to hope for Austrian

support, while the sudden death of Cromwell prevented England from taking action. So on September 17, 1658, the Elector declared war on Sweden.

Though Leopold was even now unwilling to back the Elector, many Austrians had joined the Brandenburg army; and with their help, but chiefly relying on his own forces, the Elector rescued the mainland of Denmark from the Swedes. But that combination of Protestant forces, which Frederick William always desired, was again prevented not only by the partiality of Richard Cromwell for Sweden, but also by the hostility of the anti-Orange faction in Holland. That hostility had been increased during the ten years which had elapsed since the controversies of the Westphalian Congress by more than one important event.

William II, who had succeeded his father, Frederick Henry, in the leadership of the House of Orange, was one of the most ambitious men of his House; and his marriage with Mary, daughter of Charles I of England, had strengthened his hostility to the Republican faction in Holland, which always inclined to Cromwell. In 1650 he had attempted to seize Amsterdam and secure absolute power in the Republic; but his death soon after that attempt, and the minority of his young son William, had enabled the Republican party to defeat these ambitious attempts, while his previous action had embittered the relations between the two parties. It was just at this time that John de Witt, the ablest and most

determined of the Republican party, had become Pensionary of Holland ; and his hostility to Brandenburg was increased by a dispute between the Elector and the Estates about the guardianship of the person and the estates of the young Prince of Orange, William III. Personal hostility to the House of Orange so deeply coloured the whole policy of De Witt that it cannot be ignored in any account of his career. But to explain his exact aims, and to estimate the strength and weakness of his position, one must study the very curious exposition of political principles set forth in his memoirs.

His central ideal is that of a sea-supported Republic, resting on its merchandize and naval power, and ignoring not only the inland Powers of Europe, but to a great extent the interest even of the inland towns of the Dutch Republic. The Statthalter's office De Witt connects with the old Countship of Flanders, and with a military despotism, and an aristocracy of birth, who were indifferent to mercantile interests, who allowed the sailors to be plundered by the Algerian pirates, and the fishermen to be cheated by English rivals ; and who were always seeking to promote their own personal interests. Filled with this idea of a rivalry between land and sea, between warlike and mercenary aims, his whole view of the struggle of the Netherlands against Spanish tyranny is narrowed and distorted. William the Silent becomes a grasper at lawless power, carrying on a war

which interferes with development of mercantile and colonial prosperity. Maurice, except when guided for a short time by Olden-Barneveld, is a tyrant who rejects reasonable terms of peace. Henry Frederick is an incapable soldier. If any good has to be admitted, it is explained away as due to other influences.

Nor are the Estates General, who so often rallied round their leaders, more favourably viewed by De Witt. They represent the Eastern (i.e. inland) towns and villages, as well as the sea-coast, and therefore cannot be expected to do justice to the local Estates of Holland, Zealand, and East Friesland. Indeed, De Witt sometimes seems to imply that the Union of Utrecht, which bound the States together, was a mistake. To the Elector of Brandenburg, therefore, the Pensionary was peculiarly hostile. His relationship with the House of Orange would go far to explain this hostility; but, besides *that*, any alliance with the Elector implied, in his present circumstances, the granting of subsidies by the Estates General, and therefore the alienation of money from domestic and specially maritime purposes. The Elector's changes of alliance from Sweden to Poland, and back again, were an object of reproach; and, while his revolt from Poland was branded as a special crime, his return to the Polish alliance was pointed to as a proof of his fickle disposition.—Thus the hostility of the Dutch Republic was shown most keenly at a time when the Elector was specially in need of help. And

on the other side Mazarin earnestly appealed to the Elector to make peace with Sweden and to join France in resisting the Austrian power. The Elector, however, was alarmed at the growing power of France; and he answered coldly that his first object must be the defence of his own country.

He was strengthened in this position by the scornful rejection which Charles Gustavus gave to the proposals for peace made by the Dutch. Richard Cromwell's resignation of the Protectorship deprived Sweden of the help of England; and on November 24, 1659, the Swedes were entirely defeated by Brandenburg and Austria at Fryborg. A curious episode followed. The Austrian policy, it will be remembered, had hitherto tended to discourage the claim of the Elector of Brandenburg on Pomerania; but Leopold now suggested that this victory should be used as an opportunity for recovering Pomerania. For once, the Elector refused to seize an opportunity for carrying out this much desired object. He pleaded that such a step would be denounced as a breach of the Treaty of Westphalia, and would cause general indignation. It is believed by some historians that Frederick William also feared that if Leopold succeeded in occupying Pomerania, he might not be easily induced to surrender it to Brandenburg. In spite, however, of the opposition of the Elector, the attack on Pomerania was made, and much of it was taken from Sweden. The Queen of Poland, who feared a new invasion

from Russia, and who profoundly distrusted Leopold, now urged Frederick William to make peace. Many things alarmed him in the proposals now put forward. The Estates of Prussia claimed to send special representatives to the Peace Conference, in addition to those sent by the Elector. The town of Elbing, which the Poles had professed to hand over to Brandenburg, also claimed special representation of the same kind. Then, while the Elector demanded that Denmark, which had so heavily suffered in the war, should be represented at the Peace Conference, the Queen of Poland wished Denmark to make a separate peace with Sweden. Nor was the Elector better pleased with the terms put forward by Sweden. He distrusted their promises of concessions to the Calvinists, and he resented their continued claims on Prussia. Moreover, he had not secured the release of his sister, the Duchess of Courland. The Queen of Poland, irritated at this neglect of her wishes, joined Leopold in a refusal to insist on the retention of Pomerania by Brandenburg; and the Poles even refused to fulfil their former promise to surrender Elbing to Brandenburg.

So when the Peace of Oliva was signed in May 1660 the Elector found that the results of the war were for him merely new bitterness and distrust between Brandenburg, Poland and Austria, while the attitude of the Dutch Republic and the Swedish Monarchy prevented any hopes of a combination between Protestant countries.

CHAPTER VII

EDUCATIONAL AND OTHER INTERNAL REFORMS

1660–1668

The Elector was now able to turn to those internal improvements of his country which he had so much at heart. In 1658 he had already begun the revivification of Berlin. A new suburb was built by well-known architects, and called Friedrichswerden, in memory of a former Elector of Brandenburg; and a special church and mayor were provided for it. This process of enlargement and beautification was to be carried on till the end of Frederick William's life; and the celebrated Avenue Unter den Linden and the Thier-Garten were due to his zeal for improvement.

But his reforms were far from being confined to these material improvements, for he devoted himself energetically to the development of the University of Frankfurt on the Oder and the founding of new universities. He discovered that in the old University of Frankfurt the students were compelled to pay large fees and to perform menial services which interfered with their studies. These grievances were

removed by the Elector, and he gave special encouragement to poor scholars. While urging the study of the Bible on the students, he was equally zealous for the promotion of physical science ; and here he came into collision with many of those who held to the old Aristotelian traditions by his encouragement of the study of Bacon and Descartes. He answered these remonstrances by saying that he could see no reason why a philosopher may not teach and discuss points that tend to the greater development of philosophic truth without reference to the decrees of Aristotle.

Even in the difficult province of Clèves the Elector founded the University of Duisburg. Previous Electors had tried to found a University there, but theological controversy had hindered their efforts. Frederick William's University, however, though apparently in rivalry with the neighbouring Jesuit College in Clèves, had no taint of religious exclusiveness ; and a professor, who was driven away from a college in another State because of his championship of Descartes, became a teacher at Duisburg, and helped to encourage the new growth of intellectual life. At a rather later period a Swede named Stryke, who had found his freedom hampered by the rigid Lutheranism of his own country, issued an appeal to all lovers of learning and science and all friends of freedom, who had been hindered in their worship, or oppressed by tyranny in their own country, or banished unjustly, and to all lovers of learned intercourse, to come to Brandenburg, as a free State in which they

could carry on their studies freely. "Not only," said Stryke, "were Christians invited, but Jews, Arabians, and supporters of other non-Christian creeds, provided they would accept the customs of the country, and not carry on a hostile propaganda." This rhetorical appeal seems to have been rather permitted than approved by the Elector; and when he found that the only response to it came from English Nonconformists, who were at that time suffering from the Act of Uniformity and the Five Mile Act, he thought it wiser to discourage any future appeals of a similar kind.

But while far ahead of his time in his championship of intellectual and religious freedom, Frederick William could not abstain from despotic methods in his repression of bigotry. He saw, clearly enough, that pulpit controversy led to bitter quarrels, and turned men's minds away from real devotion. Yet, not content with wise hints of discouragement, he insisted on demanding from preachers that they should sign a promise to abstain from controversy in the pulpit. It must be obvious that it would be more than difficult to carry out such a rule with any consistency, since it would involve the abstention from reference to any topic that might be considered controversial by any critic. Paul Gerhardt, the famous hymn-writer, who had been appointed preacher at one of the chief churches in Berlin, declined to sign the agreement. The Elector appreciated Gerhardt's piety and ability and tried to persuade him to give at least a verbal and general promise on the subject. But

Gerhardt felt that, under the circumstances, even such a promise would be a burden on his conscience, and so he resigned his preachership.

Perhaps something of the same despotic tendency may be observed in the Elector's legislation on moral questions. Adultery he punished with death, even, as it was generally noted, in the case of nobles ; and a duellist who killed his opponent was subject to the same penalty. These laws, however much they may appeal to the sterner feelings of justice, could never produce the intended results, and this legislation therefore must be reckoned as a failure. It ought, however, to be mentioned in justice to the Elector, that he often showed in matters that did not conflict with his special political schemes a real desire for recognition of individual freedom, which seems to have been somewhat in advance of his time. Thus, in his attempt at a reformation of the Guild system, he aimed at removing some of their restrictions in the appointment of Masters in the different trades, and those better known restrictions on the admission of apprentices to the different trades. In the former of these reforms he had hoped to secure the help of the Imperial Diet, so that he might make it a German rather than a Brandenburg reform. But the want of support which he received from the Diet forced him to confine his efforts to his own State, and even in *that* the task was so difficult that the reform was not completed till after his death.

CHAPTER VIII

QUESTION OF POLISH SUCCESSION—REMONSTRANCES OF THE ELECTOR ABOUT THE HUGUENOTS—TURKISH WAR—TREACHERY OF LEOPOLD—ALLIANCE OF THE ELECTOR WITH FRANCE—DEATH OF THE ELECTRESS

1660–1666

I SPOKE in the last chapter of the stern character of the legislation introduced by the Elector and his tendency to trust to sweeping exercise of despotic authority. No doubt the temper displayed in such methods of action may be partly accounted for by the terrible struggle in which he was engaged in Europe, and the isolated position in which he continually found himself. The Peace of Oliva had been signed in 1660, and in the same year Charles II returned to England. This return might have seemed a welcome change to the Elector, who had assisted the Stuarts and who felt that his connection with them, through the House of Orange, might have secured him the sympathy of the new English king. But Charles was already under the influence of Louis XIV, and though the anti-Orange party in Holland were ready enough to suspect and

repel the German uncle of the young Prince of Orange, his English kinsman was already looking on this ambitious young relative with suspicion and distrust, and even hoped to form an anti-Dutch alliance.

Frederick William, on his part, was as much alarmed and repelled by the growing power of France as Charles was attracted by it. The influence of Louis over the Rhine League gave warning of the danger of French influence in Germany, while his friendliness to Sweden in the recent war showed how his power might be used in the north of Europe. But it was in Poland that the most immediate danger of French intrigue was evident at this time. John Casimir had no heir, and his feeble character and dislike to the difficulties of his position, pointed to his coming abdication.

Under these circumstances, it was natural that a series of intrigues should be begun for securing the succession to the Polish Kingdom. Louis proposed the Duc d'Enghien as candidate ; and Marie Louise, the Queen of Poland, as a Frenchwoman by birth, favoured the Duke's candidature ; while the resentment at the Elector's opposition to her plans about peace had led her to grudge the restoration of Elbing and Draheim to Brandenburg, and embittered her feelings towards Frederick William.

On the other hand, Lubonirski, the Grand Marshal of Poland, renewed the proposal that Frederick William should become King of Poland. Again many

advantages seemed likely to be secured by this arrangement; but the Electress pressed on her husband the recollection of those scruples which had formerly induced him to refuse this proposal; and the Elector's own conscience, strengthened by the warnings of his wife and Schwerin, led him again to refuse the change of faith, which must have accompanied the acceptance of the Polish crown.

But this unwillingness to accept the crown for himself was very far from implying a willingness to accept the French candidate. Indeed, the successive acts of violence which Louis committed at this time were of a kind which left a lasting impression on the Elector's mind. The worst of all these in the eyes of the Elector was the occupation of the Principality of Orange, in which Frederick William, as one of the guardians of his nephew, felt a special interest.

It is difficult to realize the indignation which this act of Louis roused in others less personally interested than Frederick William in the House of Orange, unless we remember that this Principality had existed as a separate State since the time when the Goths broke up the Roman Empire in Gaul. This specially rich and fertile district, then known as Arausio, had remained practically unmolested by Goth, Frank or any other intruder; and about 1563 it had passed into the possession of the House of Nassau. But Louis XIV saw in the dispute about the wardship of the Prince of Orange and his estates an admirable

opportunity for further robberies. So he represented to the widow of William II that she needed his protection against the designs of De Witt ; and under this excuse he obtained entrance into the chief fortress of the Principality, pulled down most of its defences, and imprisoned its governor, Count Dohna.

Deeply as Frederick William resented this treacherous outrage, he was unable at once to intervene actively in defence of his sister-in-law. But his indignation against Louis was still more increased by the persecution of the Huguenots, to whom the Elector was offering a welcome and protection in Brandenburg.

In 1660 the Elector had sent a sharp remonstrance to Louis on the breach of faith involved in some of these persecutions. The king fiercely answered that the matter concerned him only ; but he further condescended to the falsehood that the Huguenots had the same rights as were enjoyed by the other French subjects. Frederick William did not trust this statement. He offered a refuge to the persecuted Protestants in his Rhenish-Westphalian district, and in the following year he settled some in Berlin.

It can certainly not be a reproach to the Elector that his championship of the persecuted worked in with his schemes for restoring the prosperity of Brandenburg ; and he gave the French settlers some of the special privileges which he had already granted to the Dutch immigrants. Unfortunately the relations of Frederick

William with France were always of an embarrassing kind, which were perpetually placing him in a false position. In 1656, during his struggle with Poland, he had signed a treaty of alliance with France for six years ; and though the terms had been guarded, so as to secure the Elector against complicity in Louis' anti-German policy, they had involved him in pecuniary obligations to France, with which Louis did not fail to taunt him. And now, when the grounds of hostility between the two countries were so much more evident, other considerations hampered the Elector, and prevented active hostility to France.

The attention of Europe had been roused by a Turkish invasion of Transylvania. The invaders surprised the inhabitants, murdered George Rakoczy, their prince, set up a rival prince named Achmet Kiuprili, and overran a great part of Hungary. Leopold summoned a Reichstag to raise funds to resist this invasion ; and Frederick William urged both the Rhine League and its French patron to suspend other grounds of quarrel, and help the Empire to repel the Turkish invaders. At the same time he marched into Hungary, and signally defeated the Turks at Czernowitz. But Leopold, as usual, showed ingratitude and distrust of his liberators. He made very bad arrangements for the accommodation of the Brandenburg troops, and supplied them so badly with food, that disease broke out in the camp. He also refused to recognize the claim of the Elector to the Duchy of

Jaegerndorf in Silesia. Under these circumstances, Frederick William listened to a proposal for an alliance with France. Even so severe a critic of Frederick William as M. Georges Pagés admits that this alliance was purely defensive, and did not include the allies either of Brandenburg or France. But Pagés considers that the Elector secured some temporary advantage by this alliance; and it was followed by a reluctant union with the Rhine League. Louis, on his side, promised to surrender the Principality of Orange, and to assist the Elector by pressing for the fulfilment of the promises of the Poles to surrender Elbing.

Yet even this alliance did not really bring Brandenburg much nearer to France. The Elector was alarmed at the degrading peace into which French influence had forced Leopold, by which the Emperor had been obliged to surrender the whole of Transylvania to the Turks; and Frederick William was so impressed by the dangers thus caused to the German Empire that he thought it wise to strengthen the Emperor's position, and to defend him against the abuse and ridicule which were, not undeservedly, heaped upon him. Nor was Frederick William's relation with the Rhine League of long duration, for a new controversy broke out which brought home to the Elector the anomalous position in which the French alliance had placed him.

The Archbishop of Mainz, who had a standing

quarrel with the Protestant town of Erfurt, had suddenly called on the Emperor to put Erfurt under the ban of the Empire, while at the same time he appealed to the King of France, as the chief protector of the Rhine League, to help him in enforcing his claims on Erfurt. The Erfurt citizens, on the other hand, appealed to the Elector of Brandenburg, as champion of Protestantism, to protect them against the encroachments of the Archbishop. Louis, with a readiness which he afterwards regretted, had sent a force against Erfurt; and the Elector found himself prevented by the terms of his alliance with France from making more than peaceable protests against the Archbishop's action. So Erfurt, unable to defend itself, was forced to submit. In two other cases which occurred about this time the Elector was, in a similar manner, forced to confine himself to peaceable remonstrances, and as it seemed to some, to sacrifice the interests of Protestantism to the claims of the alliance with France. But in all these cases he was, no doubt, influenced by a desire to preserve peace and unity in Europe, as the only hope of eventually repelling the Turkish invader. In another case in which he was called on for action, in what he considered an unjust quarrel, he was better able to show his true colours.

The Bishop of Münster, a very fiery champion of the Roman Catholic cause, had a special grievance against the Dutch about the lordship of Börkelo,

which he declared that the Estates General were unjustly withholding from him; and he hoped that he could make use of this grievance to combine all those who had causes of complaint against the Dutch. Louis' desire to seize upon Spanish Flanders would have led *him* to listen to the Bishop's proposal; and the Bishop hoped also to induce the Elector to take this opportunity of expelling the Dutch garrisons from the cities of Clèves. The removal of these garrisons was, with the Elector, an object of almost as keen desire as the recovery of Pomerania, as he felt that their retention in the country weakened still further his hold on the discontented Estates of Clèves. De Witt's many acts of ungraciousness might be expected to have quickened the zeal of Frederick William in this matter, and the alliance with France naturally pointed in the same direction. Lastly, the naval war, then proceeding between England and Holland, would have given him a chance of easy victory. But the Elector, in spite of all these temptations to yield to the solicitations of the French, still looked on Holland as the great bulwark of the Protestant cause, and he was resolved that his alliance with France should not lead him to abet Louis' schemes of aggrandizement.[1] At the same time, he was willing to

[1] The extreme difficulties and uncertainties of the Elector's position, his ill-treatment by the Dutch and his careful endeavour to preserve a neutral attitude both towards France and Münster, are well brought out in a letter by so shrewd an observer as John Locke. See his *Life*, by Lord King, ed. 1829, pp. 11–13.

consider an alliance with the Bishop of Münster and the Count of Neuburg of a purely defensive kind, provided that it did not involve an attack on Holland. The Bishop, indeed, could not be wholly restrained from such an attack; and, in spite of the Elector's remonstrances, he joined Charles II against the Dutch. Yet, even now, the Elector urged a friendly attitude towards Holland; and he was seconded in this appeal by his former minister, Waldeck, who had entered the service of the Protestant Duke of Luneburg. Louis was by no means anxious for a premature breach with Holland, for he hoped to secure the province of Spanish Flanders without direct offence to the Dutch. Thus the Elector was enabled, without violating his agreement with France, to form an alliance with Holland. De Witt, indeed, behaved as ungraciously as usual, not only refusing to withdraw the Dutch garrisons from Clèves, but even declining to recognize Pomerania or Prussia as part of the Elector's dominions, or as included in the alliance between Holland and Brandenburg. The Elector, nevertheless, still maintained his pacific policy; and in April 1666 the Bishop of Münster was persuaded to make peace with Holland and even to resign his claim on Börkelo.

Louis, indeed, still persisted in his hope of dragging the Elector into his schemes against Spanish Flanders; and he even fancied that he could win the Electress and Schwerin to his side by the offer of money. So

far, however, was he from succeeding in these designs that the Elector seized the opportunity of making a friendly arrangement with the new Count of Neuburg, by which Frederick William promised to support the Count's candidature for the Polish throne in opposition to the Duc d'Enghien, in consideration of the Count's consenting to a re-arrangement of the Clèves inheritance which would be more favourable to Brandenburg.

But the year 1666, which seemed to secure so much firmer and more independent a position to the Elector, was marked also by his greatest loss. The Electress Louise, already much broken down by the death of her youngest son, finally succumbed to her troubles. Her death produced a great effect on the Elector's life, and, to some extent, perhaps, on his public action. Her extreme gentleness of spirit must have checked his often impetuous anger. On one occasion she had been robbed by a servant, and fearing that too severe a punishment might have been inflicted on him, she urged him to fly, and even gave him money to assist his escape. When the Elector indignantly declared that he would have hung the offender, Louise answered: "If he had stolen all my money and jewels, no drop of his blood should have been shed on my account."

Yet she was vigorous in maintaining order in the castle, and succeeded in suppressing the prevailing drunkenness. At the same time she threw herself

heartily into her husband's work, and even accompanied him to the battlefield. The servants of the castle reported that, after her death, they often saw the Elector standing before her picture, and exclaiming: "Louise, Louise, wie sehr vermisse ich deinen weisen Rath" ("Louise, Louise, how much I miss thy wise counsel").

CHAPTER IX

RELATIONS WITH SWEDEN—DEFENCE OF BREMEN—AGGRESSIONS OF FRANCE—ELECTOR'S RELATIONS WITH THE ESTATES OF CLÈVES—POLISH ELECTION—NEW ALLIANCE WITH FRANCE—TRIPLE ALLIANCE BETWEEN ENGLAND, HOLLAND, AND SWEDEN

1666–1668

As far as external politics were concerned, the two years that followed the death of Louise were marked by important successes in the Elector's policy. Sweden, otherwise occupied at the time, was now forced to abandon her opposition to the surrender of Magdeburg to the Elector ; and the citizens of that town found that Frederick William was more willing to concede and protect their liberties than their Episcopal Administrator had been. Better still, the Swedes at last consented to surrender those claims on Prussia, which they had put forward during the struggle with Poland, on condition that Russia should be compelled to surrender Esthonia and Livonia to the Swedes. At the same time the Elector repelled the attack which Sweden had made on the free town of Bremen, and secured to that city its old position in

the Empire. The importance of these successes lay largely in the fact that the Elector was able to secure them without any help from his French ally ; and, in the case of the Bremen settlement, Louis felt some chagrin at the credit gained by the Elector as the champion of German freedom. Indeed, the threatening attitude of Louis, both towards Spanish Flanders and Elsass, was now alarming both Leopold and De Witt ; and when, in May 1667, the death of the Queen of Poland gave Louis the excuse of claiming her inheritance in Spanish Flanders, Turenne suddenly marched his forces into that country, and seized on some of the chief towns. De Witt most unwillingly admitted his need of the Elector's help ; and Leopold wrote to him : " Neither you nor the Roman Empire can abandon that distinguished member of the Roman Empire, the Burgundian circle, or leave it helpless."

The Elector felt that the lawless aggression of Louis on what had been once part of the German Empire justified him in ignoring his previous alliance with France and in preparing for military action. But Leopold again hung back ; the Diet wasted its time in useless debates, and De Witt grudged the subsidies which the Elector's troops would have required to carry on the campaign. At the same time, the Bishop of Münster eagerly offered his help to Louis if the King would help him to recover Börkelo from Holland ; and Louis, elated by his victories in

Flanders, threatened to invade Elsass, and even sanctioned the publication of a pamphlet which asserted the claims of France over an Empire which, though still called Roman, had practically become German. Perhaps amid all these dangers the most alarming difficulty of the Elector was the position of his province of Clèves. Separated as it was from the rest of the Elector's dominions, and exposed to special attacks of the enemy, Frederick William found himself unable to supply these subjects of his with adequate defence; and when Louis poured his troops into the towns of Clèves, the Elector was forced to recognize the right of the Estates of Clèves to make their own terms with France, and secure a position of neutrality, which was not conceded to the other parts of the Electoral domains.

Nevertheless, two opposite causes were hastening the establishment of peace. Louis, alarmed at the storm raised by his claim on the German Empire, disowned and imprisoned the author of the pamphlet, and declared his willingness to content himself, for a time, with the land which he had already conquered in Spanish Flanders; while De Witt, irritated by Leopold's slackness, and ever jealous of the uncle of the Prince of Orange, decided not only to abandon any defence of the territory conquered by Louis in Spanish Flanders, but even to threaten Spain with hostility if she would not satisfy what De Witt now called the just claims of France.

Thus deserted, as usual, by his allies, the Elector found himself once more at the mercy of France ; and he again consented to an alliance by which he was bound to re-enter the Rhine League and to intervene between Spain and France to secure a settlement of the question of Spanish Flanders. Louis, on his part, thought it necessary to yield some point to the Elector ; and he consented not only to abandon the French candidate for the Polish crown, but to support the Count of Neuburg's candidature. The Elector, indeed, discovered that in spite of his promise, Louis continued his intrigues for the Polish crown ; but in this matter all the alien candidates were disappointed, for in 1668 the Poles elected a Polish nobleman as their king.

However ignominious it might seem for the Elector to be dragged into a new alliance with France, the enemy of Germany, it cannot be said that the gain of the connection was wholly on Louis' side or the injury wholly to Brandenburg. The Polish settlement was, in the main, a gain to the Elector, for it was accompanied by the final surrender, so long promised, of Elbing and Draheim. The Rhine League, already torn by the divisions between its Protestant and Roman Catholic members, soon dissolved itself, and the same year that saw the Polish Election saw also the conclusion of the Triple Alliance between England, Holland, and Sweden.

CHAPTER X

FROM THE FORMATION OF THE TRIPLE ALLIANCE TO DEATH OF DE WITT

1666–1672

INTIMATELY as the history of the Great Elector is connected with the history of the Netherlands, the policy of the Dutch during their guidance by De Witt is affected by wholly different considerations from those which moulded the actions of the Elector of Brandenburg; and on the other hand, the Dutchman is so utterly uninfluenced by those wider outlooks and more varied interests which complicated, and often discredited, the public actions of Frederick William that, in order fully to understand the circumstances which produced the results which we have to consider, it is necessary so to break the narrative of Frederick William's career, that we may give a connected account of that curious episode in Dutch history, the formation and ultimate failure of the Triple Alliance.

From the account which I gave above of De Witt's policy it will be seen that he must always have desired to cut short the land wars in which the Republic was engaged, and therefore, amongst others, the struggle

with England. As early as 1660, while the feeling in England was still bitter against the Dutch, we find De Witt desiring peace and (in spite of his general dislike to alliances) a close understanding with England. Charles, however, was evidently offended at the exclusion of the Prince of Orange from the Statthaltership, and his resentment was all the more bitter because he had good reason to believe that Cromwell had been one of the chief advocates of that exclusion. In his denials of this latter charge, and in his explanation of the restrictions imposed on the action of the young Prince, I cannot find much proof of that exceptional candour and straightforwardness which Macaulay attributed to De Witt. On the other hand, though the Estates of Holland responded to the wishes of their Pensionary, some of the other local Estates found fault with the too binding character of the clauses of the proposed treaty. But, in spite of these difficulties, the negotiations had gone so far in 1662 that an agreement had been made that, if either party should conclude an alliance with a third Power, the party joining that alliance should give notice of it to their original ally. Still difficulties arose ; and it is noteworthy that among the chief hindrances to an understanding were the claims and counter-claims of compensation for injuries inflicted by the English and Dutch East India Companies on the rival sailors.

But the strangest and most confusing part of the affair is the attitude of De Witt towards France during

these negotiations with England. Even a man with so limited a power of realizing the point of view of a foreign country must have surely been aware that Louis had an exceptional hold on Charles II, and that a separate alliance between England and Holland, especially when Sweden was to be invited to join the alliance, would be an object of suspicion and alarm to France. Yet, at first, De Witt was disposed to assume a friendly attitude on the part of the French king. In his exposition of general policy, he had characteristically insisted that, as France had need of more goods from the Netherlands than they required from her, she must be bound to a friendly relation with them. And he had boldly assumed that any of the cities (or at least the maritime cities) of the Republic could hold their own against any invader. Nay, he had given yet more startling proofs of his confidence in France. During the struggle with the Bishop of Münster he had consented that the Dutch troops should be placed under Turenne; and on the very eve of the conclusion of the treaty with England he accepted a proposal that a French captain should place his vessels under the command of Admiral De Ruyter.

But, when the final negotiations with Sir William Temple begin, De Witt's tone begins to change. In February 1668 he expresses great fear of the intentions of Louis, who, as he believes, desires to seize not only the remainder of Spanish Flanders, but even Luxemburg; and he earnestly hopes that, in that case,

England will join the Netherlands in a naval war against France. And though he still refuses to include Spain in the new alliance, and even declares his belief that Louis will not break his word, yet *that* belief must have been very feeble, since he mentions that the Dutch forces have been gathered at Berg op Zoom to invade Spanish Flanders, and that forty-eight Dutch men-of-war are ready to co-operate with the English fleet. Yet these preparations were not sufficient; for, hardly had the treaty with England and Sweden been signed, when Louis, who had been secretly influencing Charles II, through his sister the Duchess of Orleans, poured his troops into Flanders, and seized forty Dutch cities in less than forty days. It is difficult to reach the exact truth through the invectives of very savage partisans. But it is quite clear that, in spite of the preparations above mentioned, some towns had been ill-provided with garrisons and governors, and that in one case at least there was some ground for suspecting one of the officials of treason in withdrawing troops from a special point of vantage. In the wild panic which this treacherous invasion caused, there was no room for justice or moderation. Even Admiral de Ruyter was in danger of his life. A savage mob broke into the house of De Witt and his brother Cornelius and murdered them in the most brutal manner. At the same time William of Orange was made General of the Dutch forces, and the dignity of Statthalter was restored for his benefit.

CHAPTER XI

STRUGGLES OF THE ELECTOR WITH THE ESTATES OF CLÈVES AND PRUSSIA—EXECUTION OF KALKSTEIN—SECOND MARRIAGE OF THE ELECTOR—NEW AGGRESSIONS OF FRANCE—OPPOSITION OF LEOPOLD TO FREDERICK WILLIAM—WAR WITH FRANCE—TREATY OF VOSSEM

1666–1673

In the meantime, the Elector had found that the opposition to his policy by the Estates of his various provinces was coming to a crisis. In Clèves, as I have already shown, the reluctance to accept the Elector's nationalizing policy had been always greater than in any other part of his dominions. This opposition had been due, not only to the remoteness of the province from Brandenburg, and its close contact with the districts of Jülich and Berg, to which it had formerly been united, but also to the oligarchical character of the Estates.

The knights and larger towns had secured the main part of the representation, and the smaller towns and peasantry had little or no share in the government.

But though, in ordinary times, aristocratic prejudice may have accentuated in Clèves, as in Prussia, the opposition to the Elector, the sufferings brought by the war, and specially by the French invasion of this unfortunate province, accounted sufficiently for the dislike to the demands for more money, which the general needs of the State seemed to necessitate. The Elector's irascible temper had been quickened by his recent controversies; and those difficulties seem to have dulled his sense of sympathy with the sufferings of Clèves, for he met the remonstrances of the Estates with such fierce rebukes that the Clèves citizens contrasted the treatment which they received from him with that experienced by their kinsmen who lived under the Bishop of Münster. Frederick William insisted on the right of opening all their letters, declared that, while he would concede to them the right of raising direct taxes, he would himself settle the indirect taxes on his own authority; and when they called attention to the miseries which they were suffering and the number of peasants who were leaving the land to avoid the special burdens imposed by the war, the Elector roughly refused to consider their complaints, and threatened to send special tax-collectors from Berlin if they would not send the money freely.

At last the summary arrest of a former Burgomaster of Clèves, and the seizure of some official papers by the Elector, brought matters to such a dangerous

point that the Dutch Governor of Clèves, Johann Moritz of Nassau, intervened in the dispute and produced a temporary settlement between the Elector and the Estates.

In Prussia the quarrel had risen to an even more dangerous height, for two active agitators had seized the opportunity to revive the old claims of Poland over Prussia. Roth, a merchant of Königsberg (the most powerful and independent of the Prussian cities) had been ennobled, under the name of Rothenstein, by the Polish king; and he was anxious to assert the right of the Lutherans to dominate Königsberg and suppress the Calvinists. At the same time, Ludwig von Kalkstein, one of the most turbulent nobles of Prussia, was fiercely rejecting all proposals for an understanding. The appointment of a non-Prussian Governor of the province had roused all the exclusive Prussian feeling; and Kalkstein accused his opponents of being bribed, threatened to throw them out of the window, and challenged the Marshal of the Assembly to a duel. The Elector arrested Kalkstein and Roth, and hoped to lessen the bitterness of the opposition by reducing his forces; but Kalkstein escaped to Warsaw and laid his grievances before the Polish Diet. It is even said that he pretended to become a Roman Catholic in order to win the Diet to his side. But such a concession was scarcely needed to rouse the old Polish desire to secure a hold on Prussia; and the new Polish king, a weak and insignificant man, readily

supported the wishes of the Diet. Frederick William was at the time strengthening the power of the Prussian towns against the nobles by forbidding the latter to take part in trade ; and this, no doubt, increased the opposition of the Prussian nobles and their determination to appeal to Poland against him. He now determined to send a secret agent named Brandt to Warsaw to try to seize Kalkstein. Though Brandt's mission was not openly revealed, Kalkstein showed his alarm by taking refuge in a convent. In spite of this attempt to evade arrest, Brandt succeeded at last in effecting his capture and sending him off to Berlin. The Poles were so furious at this illegal action that Brandt had to fly from Warsaw. The Elector disowned Brandt's action and offered to enquire into it. But, at the same time, he demanded a confirmation of the old Treaty of Wehlau, which had recognized Prussia's independence of Poland. The Poles were just then alarmed at the threat of a joint invasion of Poland by Turks and Cossacks ; and, as the Elector had offered to assist them to resist the invasion, the Diet consented to confirm more definitely the Treaty of Wehlau.

But the enquiry into Brandt's action proved to be a mere farce ; and Kalkstein was tried, tortured, and executed a few months after the confirmation of the Treaty of Wehlau by the Polish Diet.

In these violent transactions Frederick William is believed to have set aside the advice of his Council, and to have acted solely on his own responsibility. Perhaps

one may observe the effect of the loss of Louise's influence, which the Elector must have felt all the more strongly, as he had recently filled her place by his marriage with Dorothea, Duchess of Brunswick, a self-seeking and ambitious woman who, as we shall see, brought much misery and division into the Elector's family. Her character and its effects on Brandenburg may be better considered in connection with a later controversy.

In the meantime, the storm had burst in Holland, and the sudden victories of Louis had alarmed Europe. Nor had Louis much reason to fear the active intervention of Sweden. Yet, even in this moment of apparent victory, Louis showed his growing sense of the importance of the position of Brandenburg, and made desperate efforts to win Frederick William to his side. The Elector, however, felt that the freedom of Protestant Europe and the independence of Germany were bound up with the safety of Holland; and he set himself to persuade the other German princes of the need for speedy action. But neither they nor the Emperor were inclined to act with Holland, though Leopold admitted the danger of the growing power of France. The truth was that Leopold saw at this time an opportunity of weakening the power of the princes, who most hampered his struggle for despotism. For instance, the Estates of Clèves were just now at the height of their opposition to Frederick William, and they hoped by combining once more

with the Estates of Jülich and Berg to weaken the Elector of Brandenburg and the Count of Neuburg.

The Elector and the Count appealed in vain to the Emperor, for Leopold readily decided in favour of the right of the Estates to combine against their rulers, whom he feared and distrusted. Encouraged by this patronage, the Estates of Clèves and Mark opposed the demands of the Elector for money and troops, though Spaen, their Dutch Governor, offered to pledge his own lands as security for the sum required.

In the meantime, Louis was pressing the Elector to declare his intentions about Holland. On this point, as Louis practically admitted, the Elector had not committed himself by his alliance with France. Frederick William now absolutely declined to give an answer as to his course of action in case of war between France and Holland; and he followed this refusal in 1671 by repelling a demand that he should give a guarantee of neutrality. But Louis, having detached Charles II from his former allies, and committed him to the coming war with Holland, now actually imagined that he might take advantage of the quarrel between William of Orange and De Witt to induce the young prince to betray his country and join the French alliance. He also hoped to win over Frederick William by promising to secure him the towns of Clèves, which were still occupied by the Dutch. For some time the Elector still hoped to preserve peace, as he trusted that Sweden might

remain firm to the Triple Alliance, and he hoped against hope for the refusal of Charles II to join the war.

But these expectations were finally destroyed when, in April 1672, the English fleet attacked Holland, and this act of violence was followed by the French declaration of war. Still the Elector's Council (even those members who were most friendly to Holland) endeavoured to restrain him from any warlike act. So it was against their advice that on May 6 he signed the treaty of alliance with Holland. It was an unfortunate result of his previous treaty with France that, even now, he was forced to keep up the forms of friendship with Louis, though his recall of his ambassador from Paris gave a sign of his intentions which the King could not misunderstand. One reason of Frederick William's desire for delay was that he still hoped to prevail on Leopold to recognize his duty to defend the liberties of Europe. At last, in June, he induced the hesitating Emperor to sign a treaty of alliance with Brandenburg against France, and Leopold promised that his general, Montecuccoli, should join the Elector in August. But Montecuccoli received secret orders to delay his march as long as possible; and it was in reliance solely on his own forces that the Elector marched to the defence of Holland. The Estates General, rising for once above their petty suspicions, pronounced, through their President, a warm eulogy on the Elector as the one man who had

been sufficiently magnanimous to help them when all the world had abandoned them. The Duke of Lorraine, whose territory had just been seized by Louis in defiance of German opinion, joined his forces to those of the Elector. But among the German Electors fear and petty jealousy were stronger than the sense of duty to their country. The Elector of Trier, though admitting the justice of Frederick William's cause, was compelled by the French to refuse passage to the Brandenburg troops; and the Elector of Mainz revenged, by a similar prohibition, the opposition of Frederick William to the above-mentioned attack on the Protestants of Erfurt. Even the Elector Palatine doubted if he could allow the passage of troops in time of peace.

Frederick William refused to be daunted. He succeeded with great trouble in building a special bridge across the Rhine for his troops, not far from Mainz; and he thereby gave such occupation to Turenne's troops that William of Orange was enabled to rally his forces for the defence of his country. Yet even now the Dutch Estates General grudged Frederick William the money needed for his troops, and, at the same time, reproached him with not giving them all the help they had expected of him. Sweden began to incline to France. Montecuccoli, the Emperor's general, hampered the Elector's movements by all means in his power; and Poland maintained an unfriendly neutrality.

But in spite of niggardly friends and powerful enemies, the Elector insisted on offering battle in February 1673. Turenne, however, refused to be drawn to the attack; and the terrible cold forced the Elector to retreat to Bielefeld. Again the Imperialist troops refused to come to the help of their ally, and want of food compelled him to abandon his province of Mark. Turenne now marched forward, till the Elector was finally forced to retreat to Potsdam. The Prince of Orange vainly urged the Estates General to supply funds to the Brandenburg troops; and the Elector's Council appealed to him to secure a general peace. The Elector answered that, if the Emperor would really help him in the field; if the Dutch Estates would grant him the necessary funds; and if Spain, Denmark, and Brunswick would also back him up, he would stand by Holland to the last. This declaration was made in March 1673. In April the Count of Neuburg consented to sign a provisional treaty with France; and on May 10, 1673, the Elector was once more compelled to sign a treaty of defensive alliance with France, though still guarding his right to defend the German Empire from attack. The attempts of Verjus, the French Emissary, to draw closer the alliance between France and Brandenburg, and his admission of the hostility of the Elector's Council to French aggression, are sufficient proofs that, however ignominious the alliance with France may seem, neither party was deceived as to the real

feelings of their nominal allies. Indeed, some consider that the phrases of the Treaty of Vossem (as the alliance with France was called) were so cautiously drawn that the Elector was easily able to withdraw from them.

A painful question arises in connection with the French advances to Brandenburg during this period. That most of the French envoys believed in the corruptibility of all public men seems clear enough; and even friendly critics admit the acceptance of regular bribes by many of the poorer officials, and even by some of the specially trusted Ministers of State. But some, at least, of the French envoys aimed at corrupting a man so high in character as Otto von Schwerin; and continual references are made in their correspondence with the French Government to the need of continuing, or even increasing, the "gratifications" to Schwerin. The truth seems to be that there was a very inconvenient practice of giving recognitions of the importance of the position of certain leading people in the form of money; and this practice seems, to some extent, to have been as much recognized by the Elector and other rulers as the granting of tips to servants by visitors may be in many English families. But the Elector became so much alarmed at this particular crisis about the effect of this practice that he exacted a promise from Schwerin and others, in a full Council meeting, that they would not accept these compliments during

these special negotiations. Schwerin gave his promise; and the French envoy had to admit that on more than one occasion Schwerin mentioned this promise as a reason for refusing presents. Of course, the representatives of Louis XIV had lost all faith in human honesty; and they persuaded themselves that Schwerin was willing to accept secretly what he refused openly. The irritation of Frederick William at Schwerin's cautious and pacific counsels, and a temporary alienation between the Elector and this trusted counsellor, gave excuse for a belief in a profounder disagreement between them than really existed.

But the high character always attributed to Schwerin by the most careful historians, and the evidently low views of the French envoys, may induce one to hope that, even in the time when Algernon Sydney was receiving "gratifications" from France, this Pomeranian nobleman remained true to his convictions.

CHAPTER XII

NEW AGGRESSIONS OF LOUIS—WAR IN ELSASS (ALSACE)—NEW TREACHERY OF LEOPOLD—DEATH OF CARL EMIL—INVASION OF BRANDENBURG BY SWEDEN—DIFFICULTIES OF THE ELECTOR—HIS DEFENCE OF HIS COUNTRY—RATHENOW AND FEHRBELLIN—EXPULSION OF SWEDES FROM POMERANIA—DESERTION BY LEOPOLD—PEACE OF NIMWEGEN

1673–1679

In spite of his nominal concessions, Louis soon gave proof of his dangerous intentions. In September he suddenly seized on the German Electoral town of Trier ; and he soon after overran the Flemish territory now known as Franche Comté, invaded the German province of Elsass, and threatened Strasburg. The Elector was indignant ; but he was hampered by the consideration that Leopold was as much a danger to German liberties, and as violent a persecutor of the Protestants, as Louis could be. Frederick William, however, succeeded in drawing Sweden into an agreement by which each party guaranteed the other against attack, and assured each other of the security

of their present possessions, either within or without the Empire.

A general sense of the danger to Europe from French aggression seemed now to be spreading in Germany ; and Louis' invasion of the Palatinate, and the ferocious cruelty of his soldiers, stirred the indignation even of Leopold. Louis, indeed, hoped still to keep the Elector on his side ; and though he withheld the payment of subsidies promised in the Treaty of Vossem, he tried to bribe him by offering to let him hold Trier in pledge for future concessions. The Elector indignantly refused to entertain any proposals for further approaches from Louis till France had made peace with Holland. Frederick William now hoped that he should at last make sure of the assistance which had failed him in his previous struggle ; so in July 1673 he signed a treaty of alliance with Holland ; and in October 1674 he was at the gates of Strasburg. By this vigorous advance he compelled Turenne to withdraw his forces as far as Zabern. But Bournonville, the Imperialist general, proved as backward and treacherous as Montecuccoli had shown himself in the earlier campaign.

The latter general indeed seems to have been as incompetent as he was untrustworthy and he and his master showed plainly their anti-Protestant feeling. So much did the Strasburger realize the superiority of the Elector's sympathy and help as compared with that of the Imperialists that they declared that the

Brandenburger were the only forces that they could trust, and that the Imperialists wished to ruin the Calvinist leader. Indeed, Bournonville's forces not only deserted the Elector, but began to plunder the Alsatian peasantry. The Council of War blamed Bournonville severely, but the prominence of Frederick William in the war gave many people the impression that he was responsible for the defeats which the Imperialists sustained and the great successes which, in spite of the efforts of the Brandenburger, had been secured by Turenne.

Nevertheless, the Elector struggled on, though his feelings were yet further tried by the death of his eldest son, Carl Emil, whose career was cut short by a mortal wound, and who died in Strasburg amid the grief of the citizens. The Elector's forces had not yet reached Strasburg ; but a victory at Türkheim, in which the Elector saved the Imperialist army from destruction, encouraged him to advance to the help of the old German town. Again Bournonville proved false, and deserted his ally at the critical moment, so that the Elector was forced to retreat. The vigour and capacity of the Brandenburg forces had, however, so much alarmed the French that they began to look out for another ally, who should draw off the Elector from the Alsatian war. Under these circumstances the French diplomatists decided to appeal to the Swedish love of aggression and their wish to recover their former ground in Prussia.

The recent treaty with Brandenburg did indeed appear to some of the Swedes to involve some moral obligations; and something of the old Protestant feeling had been roused by Leopold's persecution of the Hungarian Protestants. If, therefore, they were to be committed by the Government to any alliance with France, these Swedes thought that they would rather join the Hungarian insurgents against Leopold than take part in an attack on their Protestant ally of Brandenburg. But the desire for conquest and the hopes for an easy victory over an absent prince, who was being deserted by his German supporters in his defence of his German interests, had more influence with the Swedish Government than more honourable feelings could have; and while the Elector was carrying on the struggle in Alsass, the Swedes poured their troops into Brandenburg, laid waste its territory, and committed every kind of cruelty.

When the news of the Swedish invasion first reached the Elector in the thick of the Alsatian campaign, he would hardly believe in the genuineness of the attack, and hoped to settle the matter by negotiation with Sweden. But what must have astonished the Elector more than any treachery and cruelty from the Swedes was the concession made to them by the new King of Poland, who allowed the Swedish troops free passage through his dominions when they made their raid on the Brandenburg territory.

This is perhaps the best opportunity for putting

before the reader an account of the relations between Frederick William and the only other ruler among his contemporaries who has a just claim to the title of Great.

John Sobieski had many points in common with Frederick William. Both combined with a genuine anxiety for the welfare of Europe a strong zeal for their respective countries. Both had a real desire to act in accordance with law, and considerable power of magnanimous forbearance towards those who had injured them. Both were hampered in their efforts for their country's good by those who should have supported them. Both inspired hearty enthusiasm in their friends and bitter hostility in their enemies.

But the circumstances of their lives seemed to bring a continual jar between them. This was no doubt largely due to the desire of the Elector to throw off the yoke of Poland, which had already dragged him into that war with Casimir in which Sobieski had fought against Brandenburg. It had affected, too, their attitude towards the contest for the throne of Poland. The candidature of the Count of Neuburg had been backed by some of his intemperate partisans by threats of violence which had roused all the best patriots of Poland against this candidate, while the election of King Michael, which had been looked on by the Elector as at least a convenient escape from the candidature of the King of France, was condemned by Sobieski as a blow to Polish efficiency and

dignity, and the acceptance of a mean and incapable ruler.

But two most vital causes of division between the Elector and Sobieski were their relations with Turkey and with France. Though, as we shall see later on, Frederick William was eager and helpful in the final struggle against the Turkish invader, yet his mind was so distracted by the various struggles at home and abroad that he could not attach the importance to the subject which it possessed in the eyes of the Polish king. For to Sobieski the Turk was not only the enemy of European civilization in general, but the destroyer of Polish unity and the ravager of Polish territory. His grandfather had been cruelly murdered in cold blood by the Turks, and on his grave had been inscribed the words, "*Exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor*" ("May some avenger arise from our bones").

His father had carried on the traditional struggle; his elder brother had died fighting the same enemy; and during the miserable reign of Michael the Ukraine had been overrun by the Turks, and only the military genius and popular eloquence of Sobieski had been powerful enough to rally the desponding Poles and repel the invader. On the other hand, he had at this time, on more than one ground, a friendly feeling to France, and as he was neither German nor Protestant, he could not yet share any of the alarm of Frederick William about the growth of the power of Louis XIV.

Both these differences of policy affected the action of Sobieski at this crisis. It was the Marquis de Bethune, the ambassador to France, who cajoled him out of his scruples about the questionable sanction of the Swedish invasion; and it was his fears of a new Turkish invasion, called forth by the discontents in Hungary, which made him extremely reluctant to restore to the Elector the Brandenburg troops which had been lent in a time of danger from Turkey, a danger which to the Elector seemed now less formidable than the Swedish invasion.

In the meantime, the advance of the Swedish forces had roused the towns of Brandenburg on behalf of the Elector; and though many of the nobles seized this unsuitable opportunity for claiming their special privileges in the matter of methods of recruiting, the peasantry rose enthusiastically in defence of their country, formed special companies of their own, and painted flags bearing the Brandenburg eagle under a green crown, and the inscription:

> We are only peasants, and little land have we;
> But we give our blood for our lord right cheerfully.

The Swedish Government, however, in spite of the ferocious action of its generals, still professed to desire peaceful negotiation; and they offered to withdraw their troops if Frederick William would abandon the coalition against France. But even the Elector's Council were no longer in doubt; and they declared

that, if the French were allowed to conquer in this war, Germany would be lost. Still the Elector hoped for help from Denmark and Holland; and, in the meantime, he urged the Prince of Anhalt to defend the fortified towns of Brandenburg. But Denmark was exhausted by the previous war; and, though the Prince of Orange induced the States General to vote subsidies for the Brandenburg army, they pleaded financial inability to fulfil their promises. As for Leopold, he even refused to recall the Germans who had taken service in the Swedish army. At last the news of the tortures inflicted by the Swedish troops on the Brandenburgers and the desecration of their churches showed that the master's presence was needed at home; and so on June 5, 1675, Frederick William, leaving a small body of his troops in Elsass, began his march to Brandenburg. Though suffering from the gout, he refused to leave the saddle, and remained in the middle of his infantry. By careful contrivance, he managed to conceal his advance from the enemy, and at the same time to allow it to be known to the Brandenburgers. In twenty days his troops had marched three hundred kilometres; and, by these secret and vigorous efforts, he succeeded in surprising the Swedes in their central position at the town of Rathenow, destroying a whole Swedish regiment and capturing several officers.

The Brandenburg general, Derfflinger, now suggested that they should hold back the Swedes till

reinforcements could arrive from Magdeburg. But the Elector refused to wait ; and the Prinz von Homburg, who took a prominent part in the struggle, seconded the Elector's proposal, and rushed forward with his troops. Then Derfflinger saw the need of helping the prince, and the Brandenburgers compelled the Swedes to retreat to Hakenberg. Again Homburg attacked the Swedes without waiting for infantry or artillery ; and the Elector, coming to his help, seized a hill which the Swedes had failed to occupy and fired on the enemy from that point of vantage. But the danger to the Brandenburg forces was still great. The Swedes drove back several Brandenburg regiments, and killed some of their best officers. Then the Elector rushed forward, swinging his sword, and exclaiming : " Forward ! Your prince and captain will conquer with you, or die like a knight." The Swedes surrounded him, and his Master of the Stables was killed by his side (according to one account, thrusting himself between the Elector and a bullet intended for him). Nine Dragoons broke through the Swedes and rescued their general. The right wing of the Swedes was broken by a new attack of the Brandenburgers, and the Swedish general was forced to retreat to the town of Fehrbellin. The Elector's officers urged him to burn the town, but he answered : " I am not come to destroy my country, but to save it." The next day the Swedes retreated from Fehrbellin.

The peasants rose against the Swedes as they retreated, and by July 2 the Kurmark was cleared of the enemy. The battle of Fehrbellin added so much to the prestige of the Elector that some people maintain that it was to this feat that he owed his title of " Great."

He now hoped that Leopold and the German princes would at last give him some real help. But the German princes were busy disputing with each other about their claims on Bremen, and the Roman Catholic Bishop of Münster, the Protestant Duke of Luneburg, and the King of Denmark all discovered that they had special claims on this old free city of Germany which were much more important than the repulse of Swedish aggression on a German State.

The Elector, who had so recently saved Bremen from Sweden, might fairly have put forward some claim, at least, to the position of protector of Bremen ; but he hastened to renounce his claims as interfering with the common good. Nevertheless, the delay, which the hesitation of his allies had caused, led to irritation and disorder in the Brandenburg troops ; and the Elector was forced to put to death some of his men for acts of robbery. Leopold, who had so shamefully deserted Frederick William in the earlier part of the struggle, now complained of his continued absence from the Alsatian campaign ; and even the newly gained power and prestige of William of Orange were not sufficient to prevent murmurs in Holland

against the growing power of the Elector. Curiously enough, Phillipson, in the main a most friendly biographer, censures Frederick William for not at once returning to Elsass, on the ground that "the keys to Stettin and Stralsund lay on the Rhine and Scheldt," because any victory of France would enable her more surely to help Sweden against the Elector.

This criticism is rather an instance of being wise after the event. The Elector could not foresee the treatment which he would receive at the peace; but he could see that, if he retired at this crisis from Brandenburg, the Swedes would rally for a new attack; and that there was no security for the safety of his dominions till this aggressive and unscrupulous Power was driven from German territory.

Even the delay caused by the hope of help from the allies encouraged the Swedish general, Königsmark, to a new attack; and in July 1676 the struggle for Pomerania was renewed. The situation was made more critical by a victory gained by Sweden over Denmark and by the victories over the Dutch which the French were gaining both by land and sea. Even in the previous year the Estates General had made a treaty with Sweden; and now the defeat of the Prince of Orange at Maestricht gave new strength to the anti-Brandenburg party in Holland. So in October 1676 the Estates General earnestly pressed the Elector to make peace with Sweden. He was, however, still gaining ground, in spite of powerful foes

and treacherous allies; and in December 1677 he captured Stettin, and gradually swept the Swedes from Pomerania altogether. These victories strengthened the Elector's power and prestige; and produced a marked effect on his relations with the malcontent Provincial Estates; but the immediate military results were to be torn from him by the overpowering power of France and the treachery and heartlessness of his allies.

The most painful (and perhaps the most unexpected) instance of this desertion came from Holland. The victories of France, and the exhaustion of the countries which she had invaded, gave an opportunity for the anti-Orange party to recover their power; and they hastened to make peace without any consideration for the treatment which their allies would receive. William of Orange was so indignant at the proposed negotiations that he marched upon Mons to attack the French general. But the battle was indecisive, and the Peace of Nimwegen was signed in 1678.

The Dutch had already shown their hostility to the Elector of Brandenburg by refusing to recognize his special concessions to Clèves of the neutrality due to her dangerous position; and they had suffered the French troops to overrun Clèves and injure its towns. But Frederick William had hoped that Leopold would still feel some sense of his duty to the German Empire, and even before the peace he had exhorted him not to surrender Lorraine to the French. The Emperor's

Chancellor took advantage of the lawless acts of the Duke of Lorraine to describe him as the "King of the Vandals"; and Leopold not only refused to do his duty as Emperor of Germany in protecting the Duke of Lorraine, but he even met the Elector's request and remonstrances by demanding that he should send more troops to the Rhine. When, then, at the close of the struggle, the French insisted that the Elector should surrender all the territories conquered from Sweden, the Emperor refused to put forward any plea even for a partial concession to the Elector's demands; and so in 1679 Frederick William was forced to sign the Peace of Nimwegen.

CHAPTER XIII

SCHWERIN'S MISSION TO ENGLAND

1673–DECEMBER 1678

THE sense of the utter untrustworthiness of those European allies on whom he had most cause to rely must have come with even new force on the mind of the Great Elector ; and his indomitable spirit naturally led him to look round for some help, which should encourage him in his desperate efforts for the freedom of Europe.

It was after the Peace of Vossem, in 1673, that he had made an attempt to secure assistance for his designs from Charles II of England ; and, hopeless as such an effort naturally proved, the mission by which he tried to accomplish it must have given hints both to himself and to some of his Councillors of a new form of political life strangely contrasting with that to which he was accustomed, but which was ultimately to supply him with those means of success which he sought vainly on the Continent of Europe.

The emissary whom he chose as the medium of his communication with the English Court was Otto von Schwerin, the son of the wise adviser to whom the Elector had first been introduced by the Electress Louise. Young Schwerin had been born five years after Frederick William's accession to the Electoral dignity. His father had given him a very sound education; for he had sent him first to Halle, and then to Heidelberg, and at a later time to Leyden and Frankfort. His powers as a diplomatist seem soon to have attracted the attention of the Elector of Brandenburg, for in 1672 he had sent him to Dresden to win the Elector of Saxony to the alliance against France; and Frederick William was so much pleased with the young diplomatist's success that he employed him at other German Courts; and in the following year he made him a Privy Councillor. The apparent desire of France and England for peace seemed to suggest this time as a suitable one for trying to re-open friendly relations with the Court of Charles II. In this hope Frederick William was further encouraged by William of Orange and his friend Fagel; and when Schwerin arrived in London, Arlington and Coventry assured him that any misunderstanding with the Elector of Brandenburg had arisen from awkwardness of expression in the writers of letters, rather than from any hostile feeling on the part of the King of England or his chief advisers.

Charles II was always ready with those superficial

forms of courtesy of which he was so great a master; and Schwerin noticed that the King received him with uncovered head, in the presence of the whole Court. The King and the ambassador exchanged congratulations on the peace of Vossem,[1] and Charles expressed warm friendship for Frederick William. But Schwerin perceived very soon that, in any differences with France, Charles would not give help. Perhaps the most interesting point in this first visit to London was the securing of the friendship and advice of Prince Rupert (whom Schwerin persists in calling Robert). We so generally associate that prince's name with fiery charges against Puritan armies, and reckless living, that we forget that he was the son and champion of the unfortunate Queen of Bohemia, and that at this time he was specially stirred to indignation against Louis XIV by that king's savage and lawless invasion of the Palatinate and his injuries to Rupert's brother, the Elector Palatine. But not even Rupert could give hopes of action by England against France, especially as he held that the strong sympathy of the Scotch for France would always hinder the expression of English hostility to Louis. And, though the young envoy noted a tendency

[1] The utter falseness of Charles's policy from the beginning is best seen in a letter written the year before Schwerin's arrival in England, by Charles himself to Sir George Downing, Charles's agent in Holland. This cynical self-exposure is given in the *Life of Locke*, by Lord King, pp. 38–9 (same edition as above).

on Charles's part to blame William of Orange for the delays that hindered the peace, yet Schwerin's general report at the Hague of his English experiences seems to have pleased and encouraged the Dutch prince.

But the real test of English feeling about the European struggle was made on Schwerin's return to London in 1675. The war with France was then at its full height in Alsass, and Sweden was engaged in her treacherous attack on Brandenburg. It was now that Schwerin thoroughly realized the fickleness of Charles. Though Sir William Temple had been authorized to propose to France the surrender of the territory which she had seized in Alsass and the Duchy of Lorraine, yet Coventry cynically told Schwerin that a conquering king could hardly be expected to recognize rules of justice. Charles could only advise Frederick William to become neutral in the war ; while even Prince Rupert assured him that, unless the Swedes interfered with the English ships, England would take no action.

But Schwerin by this time had begun to understand that there was another power in England besides the King and the courtiers ; and that, however awkward and embarrassing parliamentary interference might seem to a ruler who was attempting to consolidate a new State, yet in an old and settled nation that same interference might hinder injustice and counteract a purely self-seeking policy.

On April 30, 1675, the House of Commons demanded the recall of the English soldiers who were still in the French army; and though Charles declared that his honour would not allow him to yield on this point, he consented that no Englishman should in future be permitted to enter the service either of France or Holland during the war.

But this compromise did not satisfy Parliament, and the news of the Elector's victories over Sweden encouraged the House, later in the year, to vote that all English soldiers who did not withdraw from the French army should be treated as rebels; and at the same time they required that every member of the House should declare on oath how much money he had received from Charles to induce them to vote for his schemes. A still further proof of the determined hostility of the House to the royal intrigues was given a little later in the year, when the King tried to use the promise of twelve ships which Parliament was willing to provide for the war against France as a means of encouraging Sweden to carry on her attacks on Brandenburg. On November 22, 1675, the King's friends used every effort to persuade the House to vote more money for the King; but the Opposition had now become aware of Charles's intentions, and by refusing the vote they prevented the attempt to weaken the Elector's advance. Charles, all this time, kept up open professions of friendship towards the Elector, and even stood godfather to

Schwerin's boy. He tried, indeed, to throw on the ambassadors of the allies the responsibility for the opposition of his Parliament, though Schwerin assured the Elector that any one who knew the English Parliament would treat with contempt the suggestion that its members could be amenable to such influence.

Charles now made a desperate attempt to crush the Opposition. A member of Parliament named Harrington had discovered that, in spite of all promises to the contrary, recruiting for France was being carried on in Scotland; and he brought his evidence before the House of Commons. Thereupon Charles summoned Harrington before the Privy Council, accused him of impertinence in his answers, and sent him to the Tower, while Lauderdale seized and secretly detained the witnesses whom Harrington had brought from Scotland. So, when Harrington was called to appear in the House of Commons, these witnesses were not forthcoming, and Harrington was sent a second time to the Tower.

Charles seems to have recognized that the Elector of Brandenburg was too strong to be openly bullied; so he vented his rage on the Spanish Ambassador, whom he accused of stirring up Harrington; and, when he waited upon Charles to explain his action, the King turned his back on him and ordered him to leave the country within twenty days.

But the House of Commons were still undaunted,

and several members assured the King that they would grant half their income to promote a war against France. The feeling on both sides was quickened by the attitude of the Dutch ambassador, Benningsen. He belonged to the anti-Orange party in the Republic, and he desired to make peace speedily with France, at the expense both of Spain and Brandenburg. Hence it came about that, while the House of Commons threatened violence against Benningsen and demanded his recall, Charles was able to use the backwardness of the Dutch Estates General as an excuse for his own delays.

On April 20, 1677, the Parliament offered to grant £600,000 for ships if the King would declare war against France ; but they demanded an explanation in May as to the King's intentions before they would confirm this grant. Arlington, who was one of Charles's most pro-French advisers, now hit on a plan of stirring up distrust against the Elector by declaring that the ships which he was building would interfere with the trade of English merchants. Schwerin assured him that the ships were needed to defend Brandenburg and recover Pomerania. In June 1677 the House of Commons entreated the King to join an alliance with Spain and Holland and the other allies against France, and the arrival of a new special Ambassador encouraged this effort. Benningsen appears to have been alarmed at this new champion of the war, and used all his efforts to depreciate him

and to emphasize the reluctance which the Dutch felt for any new engagement.

But a fresh turn was given to Dutch policy in this matter by the arrival of the Prince of Orange in England in October 1677, with a view to his betrothal with the Princess Mary; and on November 14 the marriage took place. At the same time, the English heard with surprise and delight that the Dutch had sent large support to the Spaniards.

Nevertheless, public opinion in England was somewhat divided as to the effect which the marriage was likely to produce on the Dutch attitude to the war. The King and the Duke of York certainly hoped that the marriage would lead to a speedy peace; and, though the Prince had undoubtedly been welcomed by the English people as a sturdy opponent of France, many feared that the closer connection with the Court might weaken the zeal of the Prince for the policy which was opposed to the wishes of Charles and James. This fear was oddly symbolized by a street play which Schwerin, with an insight rather unusual in an ambassador, saw well to communicate to the Elector.

In this little performance the Duke of York was represented with an Orange handkerchief round his neck, and holding a paper on which was expressed the hope that he would accomplish by a woman what the Duke of Alva had been unable to achieve, adding that the King would second Louis in his efforts for

peace. Then the paper was publicly burnt amid the cheers of the crowd. Schwerin significantly adds that Charles did not think it wise to make any enquiry about this performance.

The capture of Stettin by the Elector gave yet a new encouragement to the enemies of France; and Charles gave such a rebuff to the French Ambassador, and sent such friendly messages to Frederick William, that, on January 7, 1678, Schwerin expressed the hope for an alliance between England and Brandenburg. Even the Duke of York declared that, if Louis made further difficulties about the terms proposed to him, there would be a breach between England and France.

This encouragement came at a time when Schwerin was specially depressed by the evident weakness of some of Brandenburg's allies and the fickleness of others. So he emphasizes the position in the following remarkable words: "Thus the only hope that now remains to us is derived from the intense hatred felt by this nation (for France) which may be made useless or hindered from action; but which will produce the effect at last. No one doubts that a breach must come between the two Crowns (of England and France); and if this has at present no result, this Crown will soon find that it is alone in the game that it is playing."

Charles, as usual, tried to make capital for his own purposes out of the popular feeling; and he much alarmed the Spanish Ambassador by making it a

condition of his help that England should occupy Ostend. Prince Rupert, who hoped to command the army in Flanders, partly succeeded in removing the Spaniard's fears, and Schwerin used his influence on the same side. The difficulty unfortunately now came from Benningsen, the already suspected envoy of the Dutch Republic. He desired a separate alliance between England and Holland, which should give no aid to Spain or Brandenburg. Schwerin protested that this was contrary to the promises made by the Prince of Orange. The House of Commons still remained firm; and though its first protest against the separate peace was met by Charles with a fierce rebuke, they persisted so vehemently that Charles thought it necessary to assure the ambassadors of the Allies that he still intended war with France; and he actually sent for the Spanish ambassador to propose terms for an alliance with Spain. Schwerin was now so convinced of the power of public opinion in England that he assured the Elector that the English would refuse to pay the taxes that had been voted if they were not used for the war against France.

Charles, on his part, used all his power of lying to spread rumours as to the sincerity of Frederick William, and he found a convenient source of mischief in the question of the trade in iron ore between England and Brandenburg. In this matter Charles assured Schwerin that he had done all he could for the Elector, but that the resistance of the English

merchants was too strong for him to make further concessions.

On the other hand, the House of Commons decided that the million pounds which it had voted for the war should only be granted on condition that all French manufactures or other produce should be excluded for three years. The King, alarmed at this decision, sent the Duke of Monmouth to Ostend with 200 men, and appointed the Duke of York Commander-in-Chief of his army and Prince Rupert Admiral of the Fleet. At the same time, he released Lord Shaftesbury from the Tower, and tried to persuade him to retire into the country. But Shaftesbury answered that he had become so much used to the Tower that he would rather remain there than leave London.

But, though the King actually accepted the vote of the House of Commons apparently on their conditions, he worded his acceptance so ambiguously that they demanded further securities. Charles, on his part, was relying on the anxiety of the De Witt party and the city of Amsterdam for peace ; and in May 1678 he pressed this point on the House of Commons. Thereupon a member named Downing, who had formerly been ambassador to the Dutch Republic, declared that such a separate peace made by England and Holland would be infamous, unworthy, and injurious to the reputation of England ; and this speech was received with loud cheers.

Even when the news came that the Dutch had

accepted the terms of peace, the House still attacked the ministers who opposed war, and demanded immediate action. Loewens, the new Dutch ambassador, began thereupon to change his tone, and declared that the Republic did not desire to abandon its allies, and that 20,000 of their soldiers were eager to carry on the war.

On May 24 Schwerin announced that the House of Commons had passed a vote condemning Lauderdale's arbitrary action; and Charles answered the Spanish and Austrian ministers that, within a month, the Duke of York would be in Flanders at the head of his forces. Strengthened by the English popular feeling, Schwerin protested against any peace which should involve the surrender of the Elector's Pomeranian territory. Charles, however, was far from being at the end of his tricks; and he expressed his regret that he could not help the Elector, because the Dutch and English Parliaments prevented him from making either war or peace.

At the same time, the fury among the Commons grew so fierce that a paper was thrown into Charles's bedroom warning him that the action of the Long Parliament might be repeated; and the House of Commons declared that, if the King would not act against France, they would disband the whole of the army and fleet. The Dutch ambassador, in amazement, asked Charles if he was not master of Parliament, to which Charles replied: "Vous voyez bien que *non*."

In July Schwerin heard that Temple was to be sent to encourage the Dutch to continue the struggle, and on the 19th he reports that five English regiments have gone to Flanders with orders to place themselves under the command of the Prince of Orange.

More hopes of decisive action on the part of England and Holland had followed this despatch of troops; but these hopes were soon blighted, for on August 10 came the news that Holland and France had signed a peace. Even now both Charles and James were keeping up a pretence of hostility to France, when a series of events occurred which suddenly diverted the attention of England from the Continental struggle. These were the discovery of the letters of Edward Coleman, suggesting the conversion of England to the Roman Catholic religion, the murder of Sir Edmundbury Godfrey, and all the monstrous inventions of Titus Oates and Bedloe. Schwerin, indeed, had hoped at first that the fact that much of Coleman's correspondence was with the Confessor of Louis would strengthen the hatred of France, while the promise of Parliament to protect the King from conspirators seemed to give them new power. But he soon found that the intense interest of hunting down new victims of Oates and Shaftesbury in England entirely destroyed the zeal for any foreign adventure.

In December 1678 the English troops were recalled from Flanders, and in the same month Schwerin

took leave of Charles. But, though he retired in apparent defeat, his impression of the growing power of the English Parliament steadily increased ; and no doubt this impression helped much to form the latest convictions of Frederick William. Of these, however, it is not yet time to speak ; and it is more important in this place to mention another rebuff which also produced considerable future results.

CHAPTER XIV

CONTROVERSY WITH LEOPOLD ABOUT THE CLAIM OF BRANDENBURG ON THE SILESIAN DUCHIES—NEW VICTORY OVER SWEDEN—THE COMTE DE RÉBENAC—ACTION OF FRANCE IN CLÈVES—THE TREATY OF ST. GERMAIN—EFFECT OF THESE EVENTS ON THE ELECTOR'S POSITION—HIS GROWING POPULARITY AT HOME—HIS IMPROVEMENTS IN COMMUNICATION IN HIS STATE—BENJAMIN RAULE—SOUTH AFRICAN TRADE SCHEMES—OPPOSITION TO THEM AT HOME AND IN HOLLAND—A BRANDENBURG FLEET—SEIZURE OF SPANISH SHIPS—TREATY WITH NEGRO CHIEFS—EAST INDIA COMPANY

1673–DECEMBER 1678

THE other cause of controversy between Leopold and Frederick William to which reference was made at the end of the last chapter had arisen in connection with a province which was in the following century to be the scene of a celebrated war. As early as the year 1537, Joachim II, Elector of Brandenburg, had made an alliance with the Duke of Liegnitz. According to this treaty it was agreed that, if the Elector's family came to an end before that of the Duke of Liegnitz,

the fiefs which they had received from the King of Bohemia (the ruler of Silesia) should pass to the Duke of Liegnitz ; while, if the Duke's family came to an end first, the Silesian principalities of Liegnitz, Wohlau and Brieg should pass to Brandenburg. Although the Dukes of Liegnitz claimed an almost independent power over their lands, Ferdinand I, as King of Bohemia, protested against this treaty and compelled the Dukes of Liegnitz to abandon it. The Electors of Brandenburg always considered that the King of Bohemia had exceeded his powers by this act of compulsion, and always looked forward to the reassertion of their claim on the succession to the Duchies.

The question was unexpectedly revived in 1675 by the death of the last Duke of Liegnitz. Leopold, without delay, seized on the Duke's territories, and Frederick William was too much occupied with his Pomeranian campaign to make any immediate protest. But when the Peace of Nimwegen had stripped the Elector of his hardly won conquests in the north, he seized that opportunity to reclaim the southern territories, which had been so forcibly taken from him ; and while he renewed his former application for the Silesian Duchy of Jaegerndorf, he demanded also that Leopold should fix a time at which he would grant the Elector as a fief the Duchies of Liegnitz, Wohlau and Brieg, which had lawfully descended to him. The Emperor's representative fiercely refused

to allow a Calvinist prince to intrude into his territories, even declaring (according to one account) that it would be better for Hungary to be conquered by the Turks, and for the Emperor to go out from his lands with nothing but a staff in his hands, than that Protestants should be tolerated anywhere in the hereditary lands of the Emperor.

It was, perhaps, unavoidable that the Elector should, in disgust at the faithlessness of his allies, drift once more into an alliance with France. And yet, even while asking nominally for Frederick William's help, Louis gave unmistakable proofs of his real hostility; for he encouraged Sweden in a new attack on Prussia, though fortunately the attack was successfully repelled by the Brandenburg troops. This victory destroyed much of the old anti-Brandenburg feeling in Prussia, and made even former malcontents enthusiastic for their deliverance from Swedish tyranny. But the King of France would not, even now, use his influence with the Swedes to modify their demands on Pomerania, though his impression of the Elector's military ability made him all the more eager to secure the proposed treaty of alliance with Brandenburg. Indeed, there seems on both sides to have been a conflict of feeling between the sense of the necessity for a union and the perception of the contradictory character of the aims of the two allies. And while, in Louis' case, these feelings were mixed with a sense of growing power, in the

Elector's they sometimes rose to such a height of alarm that on one occasion he even directed his representative at Paris to try to secure the support of Mme. de Montespan for his cause. Fortunately his envoy, a strongly religious Huguenot, discouraged this ignominious proposal, and the Elector was saved from such a degradation. But the suggestion may perhaps have increased the impression of uncertainty and weakness which, in spite of his military successes, Frederick William produced at this time on some of his critics.

Among these, the most distinguished was the Comte de Rébenac, whom Louis appointed as his most confidential representative at the Brandenburg Court. This nobleman is described by Philippson in the following words :

" Sprung from an old family, which had served their kings for many generations with distinction as warriors and diplomatists, ambitious and able, full of brilliant qualities as man of the world and negotiator, proud of his country and of himself, keen in his perceptions, when they were not blinded by vanity and arrogance, as bold in his ventures in politics as he had been in war."

Such a man, while recognizing the ability of the Elector, and the need of conciliating him, would not understand either the complications of the Brandenburg position or the steadiness of purpose which underlay the apparent changes of policy ; and the

scorn of the French noble for the ruler of a small and ill-united State would be strengthened by the temporary eagerness of the Elector to ally himself with a Power that had so terribly humiliated him.

Something of this arrogant attitude was yet further shown when Frederick William hesitated to accept some of the French terms of peace; and in March 1679 Louis threatened to demand new surrenders from Brandenburg, and actually marched new forces into Clèves. Clèves the Elector well knew to be his weak point. He had made concessions to the Estates of Clèves, such as he would not make to any other province of his dominions, for he had been forced to allow them to make a separate peace with France. Though, too, the peasantry were in many cases ready to rise for the Elector against the French invader, the general feeling in Clèves seems to have been one of indifference to the struggle between Brandenburg and Sweden, impatience at the burdens laid on them, and a determination to hold meetings of the Estates under conditions disapproved by the Elector. Thus, distrusting his German allies, on doubtful terms with the Poles, threatened by the encouragement given by Louis to the Swedes, and hampered by the opposition of the Clèves Estates, Frederick William consented in June 1677 to sign the Peace of St. Germain, which committed him anew to the French alliance.

This Treaty of St. Germain is generally considered by the biographers of the Great Elector as a special

landmark in his life. At first sight, it might seem the lowest point of his fall. To have entered for a third time into an alliance which had brought him so much disappointment on the two previous occasions, and to have accepted such an alliance after such arrogant and insulting terms had been imposed on him; to find himself still an object of hostility to the greater part of his neighbours, with Sweden resenting her defeat, Sobieski using all his influence in Poland to undermine the power of Brandenburg, Leopold alternately urging him to action and betraying him in his need, and, worst of all, Holland once more, for a time, under the influence of a hostile faction, who were suspicious of the uncle of William of Orange, and jealous (as we shall see) of a rival and growing power—under such circumstances, surely Brandenburg seemed to be almost hopelessly crushed. And yet some of his most careful critics date from this very period a firmer position at home, and a higher recognition abroad, than the Elector had previously secured.

The first and most important of his gains was the greater loyalty and sympathy of his subjects. This is the more remarkable because, as lately as 1672, Roth, the ally of Kalkstein, had succeeded in stirring up the important town of Königsberg to a new insurrection; and it had needed the personal and vigorous intervention of Frederick William himself to suppress the opposition to his authority. But the Swedish invasion, the victories of the Elector, and the proofs

given, at this time, of his zeal for the improvement of his State, broke down the opposition of the Prussian nobles; and a humbler attitude from the Estates, both of Prussia and Brandenburg, seems to mark the subsequent years of Frederick William's rule. Even in Clèves, though the desire for independent action was stronger and more lasting there than in the other provinces, there yet began gradually to show itself a more conciliatory tone in the utterances of the Estates; and when the French withdrew in 1680 from Clèves and Mark, the Elector succeeded by judicious concessions in securing happier relations with these distant subjects than those which had previously prevailed.

But it was not only to his victories in the Swedish war that these changes were due. The improvements which he was introducing in the power and fortune of his State were also largely responsible for his better position in the eyes both of his subjects and of foreign Powers.

In his desire to develop the resources of his State, and at the same time to secure its unity, Frederick William had facilitated all means of communication between his different provinces. The postal arrangements had been greatly improved by him, and the digging of canals to connect the Elbe and the Oder produced a marked effect on the relations with other States. But he was far from intending to stop at the regulation of internal relations. He hoped at once to

lay the foundations of a German navy and to establish a trade with Africa.

In these schemes he was much aided by a very notable Dutchman named Benjamin Raule. Raule had been born at Vlessingen in 1634, and had been trained as a merchant seaman in his youth. He had been appointed to the office of magistrate, but the French invasion of Holland ruined him, and he fled to Brandenburg to escape his creditors. Frederick William, with his usual readiness to recognize ability, specially in a Dutchman, welcomed him as a useful ally, and made use of his services in the founding of a German navy, the development of colonies, and the promotion of schemes for African trade. But as his schemes for founding companies for trading with Africa and India took shape, the capitalists of Brandenburg and Prussia took alarm, fearing that their own ventures would be hindered by these powerful rivals; and they even found an echo for their discontent among the Elector's Councillors. Nor were the oligarchical party in Holland less alarmed. Their Dutch Trading Companies feared injury from the new ventures of the Elector; and they were so indignant at the aid which Frederick William received from Raule that they forbad all the Dutch sailors to serve in any Brandenburg ships.

Unfortunately, the naval development of Holland had been from the first connected with those large trading ventures which lead eventually to a desire for

extension of territory, to jealous rivalry with foreign Powers, and, in short, to Imperialism in its most offensive form. No doubt even the English naval expeditions had not been wholly free from that taint; and now the English East India Company had grown in importance and in jealous alarm at the power of rival companies.

Nor can it be pretended that even the Great Elector was free from the usual evil influence produced by such schemes. When, in 1680, he had succeeded, with Raule's help, in organizing a fleet of 28 vessels with 502 guns, he became eager to use it for other than defensive purposes, and he even ceased to limit it to peaceful trade. The Spaniards, who had promised at the peace to pay certain subsidies to the Elector, had not yet fulfilled their promises; so the Elector resolved to seize the Spanish convoy on its way to the West Indies. Though he failed in his larger project, he succeeded in seizing a Spanish ship of war near Ostend. This act provoked an indignant protest both from Holland and England as being an unprovoked breach of the peace. But the Elector refused to be checked in his aggressive career; and his admiral succeeded in obtaining a notable victory off Cape St. Vincent over the ships which the Spaniards were sending to protect their Silver Fleet. In 1680 the Elector gained the additional advantage of a treaty with three Negro kings on the African Gold Coast, which secured him a monopoly of their trade.

Again the Dutch protested; but they found themselves powerless to defeat these schemes, and in 1682 a Brandenburg Company was founded for trading with Guinea and Angola. Raule was placed at the head of the fleet, and he secured the help of the discontented English Dissenters and of a French Protestant, who had six times visited India. With their assistance the Elector and Raule succeeded in establishing their East Indian Company.

CHAPTER XV

MORE DIFFICULTIES WITH GERMAN PRINCES—RENEWED TURKISH WAR—ATTITUDE OF THE ELECTOR AND OF FRANCE—SOBIESKI'S VICTORY

1679–1682

THE large trading ventures mentioned in the last chapter had more than one immediate effect on the position of the Great Elector. While they raised the position of the Brandenburg State in the eyes of the world by giving it a maritime and commercial importance, they roused the fierce hostility and rivalry of those States which aimed at the same form of distinction and extension. But the King of France, whose ambitions were wholly directed to land conquests, would naturally approve the diversion of the energies of his possible enemy into maritime adventures; and the enmity which these adventures provoked in the minds of the Dutch and the Spaniards would give Louis a chance of making stronger his very uncertain alliance with the Elector of Brandenburg. Moreover, the continual persecution by Leopold of the Protestants in Hungary and the treacherous

attitude of the Elector of Saxony towards Clèves repelled Frederick William from his German allies. He even exclaimed on one occasion : " It weighs on my heart that I was born a German, for I see nothing but injustice among them." For a short time too he cherished the hope that Louis would help him to recover Pomerania. But a more vital question for the safety of Europe drew the Elector away from Louis in 1683, and compelled him once more to act with Leopold in the defence of the Empire.

The Turks, encouraged by the discontents of the Protestants in Hungary, had again advanced into Austria, and were actually threatening Vienna. Louis thought he saw in this danger an opportunity for further weakening Leopold's position ; but Frederick William indignantly protested against such an injury to European freedom and civilization ; and by holding back Louis from an intrigue in favour of the invaders, he succeeded in preserving the internal peace of the Empire, while he despatched 18,000 men to help the Emperor at his need. These troops arrived too late to take part in the great victory of September 12, 1683, by which Sobieski saved the Emperor from destruction ; but they had a share in the later struggle which won admission of their usefulness even from Leopold ; and Frederick William helped the Emperor to recover the fortress of Ofen (or Buda).

Again their sympathies about the state of Europe drew Sobieski to the Elector for a short time. In both

cases the King of France had tried to detach these champions of European civilization from the cause of Leopold. And in the Polish case he had succeeded in corrupting a permanent Polish official. In both cases he had failed ; and after the final repulse of the Turks in Transylvania, Sobieski had shown his perception of Louis' position by a sarcastic congratulation addressed to him as " the most Christian King," on the overthrow of the Mahometan invader.

But, though Sobieski seems to have been completely disillusioned about the desirability of any friendship with France, there seems to have been little sign of any special political approach on his part to the Elector of Brandenburg, though he shared with him some of the perils of the campaign, and all the ingratitude of the Holy Roman Emperor. For again Leopold had shown himself ungrateful. Even in his arrangements about the Elector's troops he again proved as inconsiderate and grudging as he had done in former campaigns, and when the Elector took advantage of his services to the Empire and Christendom to renew his claims on Silesia, he again met with rebuffs. The Emperor even shrank from accepting further help against the Turks from the Brandenburg troops, lest this assistance should lead to further demands for the settlement of the Silesian claims.

In spite of this ungracious attitude of Leopold, Frederick William was being, at this time, even more strongly convinced that the alliance with France

could not last, and that he should be forced, however reluctantly, to return to a closer and more amicable relation with the Emperor. In 1685 two events occurred which may be said to have turned this growing belief into a certainty. The first of these events was the death of Charles II of England and the accession to the throne of James II. Frederick William had realized for a long time past the coldness of Charles to himself and his growing servility to Louis; and he had at first regretted the marriage of his nephew, William of Orange, to Charles's niece, Mary. But the accession of James to the English throne changed his view of this relation; and he urged William to hasten to England before James's coronation and claim the right to the throne, on the ground of the danger to England from a Roman Catholic sovereign.

William of Orange was, no doubt, better informed of the then state of English feeling than the Elector could be, and he therefore delayed action; but the other event which marked the year 1685 was an even more decisive proof of the danger to European and Protestant freedom which must arise from an alliance with France. This was the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Frederick William had, as I have repeatedly mentioned, remonstrated with Louis on his persecution of his Protestant subjects; but on this occasion his tone was so much fiercer than before, and his offer of help to the French Calvinists so eager, that Louis

became aware that the chance of a continued alliance with Brandenburg was rapidly diminishing. As if to show that his opposition to Louis' policy was not confined to the point of religious differences, Frederick William protested, about the same time, against an attack made by Louis on the rights of Brandenburg's Roman Catholic rival, the Count of Neuburg. The Comte de Rébenac was even more startled than Louis had been at the bold tone of the Elector's protests. In the earlier period of the French alliance the Comte had been admitted to special intimacy with Frederick William, and he fancied that the subsidies promised by Louis to the Elector would make the latter absolutely dependent on France. Under these circumstances the arrogant disposition of Rébenac tempted him to venture on a dictatorial attitude, which the Elector could not endure; and he on one occasion even threatened to throw the insolent Frenchman out of the window. When such a threat is made by a ruling prince to the accredited ambassador of a foreign Power, there can be little hope of continuance of a friendly alliance between the parties concerned. Indeed, even before the actual announcement of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, Frederick William had been already renewing negotiations with Leopold, making advances to Sweden and, strangest of all, trying to form a commercial alliance with England. Yet even now he was not ready to make an open breach with Louis; and though he concluded a new

alliance in August 1685 with Holland, he declared that *that* alliance was not inconsistent with his alliance with France.

But the actual public announcement in October of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes made all hope of a real co-operation with France impossible; and the Elector not only issued a decree condemning the Edict, and offered special welcome to the persecuted Calvinists, but he even forgot for a moment his principles of religious toleration, and threatened reprisals on the Roman Catholics—a policy, however, which he speedily abandoned.

Leopold had now begun slowly to realize the necessity of a better understanding with the Elector; and, though he would not yield to all the demands of Brandenburg in reference to the Silesian Duchies, he made a concession which, if paltry in extent, was accompanied by such extreme professions of friendship as to give the impression of a change of attitude which might prove important to the future relations of Brandenburg and Austria. The Emperor's proposal was, that the small district of Schwiebus, in the north of Silesia, and a district in Friesland, should be granted to the Elector with certain small subsidies for peace time, which would be increased in amount in time of war. In return for these concessions the Elector was to renounce all other claims on any part of Silesia, and to use his influence to secure the succession to the Spanish throne to the German branch

of the House of Austria. This treaty was so unfavourable to the interests of Brandenburg that it is believed that only two of the Commissioners sent by the Elector to negotiate it were aware of its full contents. But, however dissatisfied the Elector might be with the action of his representatives, he thought it better, at so dangerous a crisis, to accept and endorse their action.

It is of course possible that at a later time Frederick William, or his successors, might have demanded the revision of so obviously unjust a settlement. But even these concessions could hardly have left such bitter memories as must have been roused by the despicable trick with which Leopold followed up this negotiation.

In order to understand the success of that trick it will be necessary to go back to 1668, when Frederick William contracted his second marriage with Dorothea, widow of the Duke of Brunswick. This lady was, from the first, received with suspicion and dislike by the Brandenburgers. Those who had admired Louise of Orange, were hardly ready to welcome a successor to her position ; while the fierce Lutherans, who had been indignant at the Calvinism of the first Electress, resented, with more reason, the change from Lutheranism to Calvinism which Dorothea adopted in order to please her husband. But yet graver grounds of dislike began to be revealed as the new Electress became better known.

From the first she seems to have put forward special claims for her own sons by her first marriage. But, while Carl Emil lived, she did not press these claims very offensively. Carl Emil, the eldest son of the Elector by his marriage with Louise, was a rough and overbearing lad, and seems to have been liked by his rather masculine step-mother. But when his death made his brother Frederick the heir to the Electorate, Dorothea's attitude became more decidedly hostile to her step-children. Frederick was a weakly and retiring youth ; and his studious habits had been encouraged by his mother, who had carefully trained him in music and drawing, and had felt the natural motherly tenderness called forth by his weak health. Carl Emil too, though rough to others, had been tender and affectionate to his younger brother. The bitter hostility of his step-mother, therefore, brought special pain to Frederick, for the Electress soon began to intrigue against him that she might deprive him of the lands specially reserved for the Elector's children, and to secure them for her own sons. Nay, she is even said to have tried to secure the succession to the Electorate for a son of her own. The first painful collision between Dorothea and Frederick arose out of his desire to marry his cousin, Elizabeth Henrietta of Hesse Cassel. The attachment had been formed in boyhood ; and, in spite of opposition, Frederick had remained faithful to his feelings. In opposition to the Electress Dorothea, Schwerin encouraged the

marriage ; the Elector accepted it, and it was celebrated in 1679.

Though preferring a quiet retiring life, Frederick had felt it his duty, as heir to the Electorate, to take an active interest in political affairs ; and his father, though not thinking highly of his ability, encouraged this tendency, and employed him in political business. He followed, in the main, his father's policy ; and, while at first distrusting and disliking France, he became strongly anti-Austrian after Leopold's betrayal of Brandenburg at the Peace of Nimwegen. As might be expected, he carried Frederick William's desire for the French alliance much farther than the Elector was inclined to do ; and on the birth of a child Frederick chose Louis XIV as its godfather. It was perhaps natural that he should over-estimate the friendliness of France ; and he tried to enlist the help of the King and his advisers to counteract Dorothea's intrigues against her step-children. But Louis was already conscious of the difficulty of his relations with Frederick William ; and he made rich presents to Dorothea to secure her influence with her husband on the side of France. She had responded to these influences only too readily ; and the French intriguers were therefore unwilling to take her step-son's side against this powerful ally at the Court of Brandenburg.

Frederick's alienation from France, and from his step-mother, was made yet more complete by another event in his life. His first wife had died four years

after her marriage, and in 1684 he resolved to marry a Hanoverian princess, who was strongly inclined to the alliance between Austria and Brandenburg, and as strongly opposed to France. When the marriage took place, Dorothea's intrigues against her step-children increased ; and she even wished to transfer the heirship of the Orange Principality from Ludwig, the Elector's third son, to her own son Philip. Worse still, she circulated insinuations against the chastity of Frederick's new wife ; and, resenting this insult, the young prince withdrew from Potsdam to Koepenick, and broke off relations with his father's Court.

It was while Frederick was in the state of mind excited by this ill-treatment, that the treaty was made between Leopold and Frederick William, by which the Elector was compelled to accept the small district of Schwiebus in place of the more important Duchies, which he had claimed. Leopold at once saw a means of escaping even from the paltry concessions which he had made ; and his diplomatic representatives approached Frederick, and persuaded him to sign a secret agreement (to be concealed from his father) by which the young heir promised that, on his accession to the Electorate, he would resign to the House of Austria all the lands which had just been secured to Brandenburg by the treaty with Frederick William.

Frederick seems little to have understood the circumstances of the Silesian succession ; and he eagerly caught at an opportunity of drawing closer to Leopold,

and thereby revenging himself at once on France and Dorothea. Moreover, the money bribe offered by the Austrian intriguers was, no doubt, welcome to him in the difficult position caused by the breach with his father. This transaction throws an ugly light on the weak character of Frederick ; but the baseness of the Austrian diplomatists is still more conspicuous. It is perhaps not without advantage to connect this Silesian intrigue with the later development of this question. However unscrupulous was the conduct of Frederick II in the war of the Austrian succession, it must be seen from the story just told that the first trickery had been on the Austrian side ; and, however absurd was the tradition so readily accepted in England, that the Voltairian cynic was the champion of orthodox Protestantism, it will be now realized that it was Leopold of Hapsburg who first identified the cause of Calvinism with the claim of the Hohenzollern family on Silesia.

CHAPTER XVI

THE ELECTOR'S APPEALS TO GERMAN PROTESTANTS—HIS DEFIANCE OF LOUIS—HIS IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH CLÈVES—BETTER FINANCIAL POSITION—HESITATION ABOUT DIRECT ATTACKS ON FRANCE—LOUIS RECONCILES FREDERICK WITH HIS FATHER—LOUIS' ALLIANCE WITH GERMAN PRINCES—DIFFICULTIES OF THE ELECTOR'S POSITION—CHOICE OF MARSHAL SCHOMBERG—FURTHER AGGRESSIONS BY LOUIS—WEAKNESS OF GERMANY—THE ELECTOR'S HELP TOWARDS THE DUTCH EXPEDITION TO ENGLAND—HIS ILLNESS AND DEATH

1682–MAY 1688

In spite of his irritation at the treatment which he had received from Leopold, the Great Elector felt most strongly that a closer union both with Germany and Holland was necessary to the carrying out of his aims, and that the French alliance was becoming more and more unreal and impossible.

In January 1686 an agreement was signed, which prepared the way for a complete reconciliation between Brandenburg and Austria; and early in the same year the Elector turned the town of Wesel into

a fortress in order to guard the Rhine against all aggression. He also appealed to all the Protestant Princes of Europe to lay aside their special quarrels and combine in support of Protestantism. Finally, in May 1686, he promised that, as soon as peace was signed with the Turks, he would supply a force to support the League against France.

Of course Rébenac was furious at the advances of the Elector to Leopold and to Holland, and in June he accused Frederick William openly of treachery to France. The Elector answered that he had no longer any wish to be an ally of Louis ; that the King of France had no right to complain of his resistance to the attacks on the German Empire ; and that he (Frederick William) had already done more for Louis than the King had any right to expect ; that Louis had broken his promises, and had continually injured Brandenburg ; and that the Elector was a free prince, and had been far too submissive to the ill-treatment which he had received. He then roughly dismissed Rébenac, and went to Clèves to meet William of Orange.

Part, no doubt, of the greater boldness of tone now adopted by the Elector was due to the better conditions of his own State. Even the Clèves Estates had consented to enquiries and supervisions which they had formerly resented ; and the Elector had been wise enough to meet them by concessions. Knyphausen's schemes of financial reform too, though not

yet fully complete, seemed certain to make the Elector independent of foreign subsidies. But though it seemed absurd to treat the alliance with France as still in evidence, both Louis and Frederick William continued to preserve an appearance of friendship, even after the rough dismissal of Rébenac.

Indeed, there is an episode connected with this period which should certainly bring credit to Louis. In 1687 Ludwig, the third son of the Elector, died of scarlet fever; and his widow declared that he had been poisoned by a favourite of the Electress Dorothea. Frederick took up the cry, and declared that he too had received poison from Dorothea. The charge seems to have been groundless; but both Frederick and his wife were so thoroughly convinced of Dorothea's unscrupulousness that they retired to Hanover, which had become hostile to Brandenburg. Frederick William now became so furious against his son that he threatened to leave the Duchy of Prussia to Dorothea's son, Philip. It seems obvious that an utterly unscrupulous opponent might have taken advantage of this quarrel to weaken the House of Brandenburg, by fomenting the bad feeling between father and son. It is, therefore, much to his credit that Louis XIV used all his influence to reconcile Frederick to his father; and in October 1687 the young couple returned to Potsdam; Dorothea dismissed the lady who was suspected of the murder of Ludwig; and Frederick William abandoned his

intentions of dividing his dominions and depriving Frederick of his full inheritance.

But, if Louis deserves credit for his abstinence from dishonourable intrigue in this instance, he was none the less eager to prepare for war, and to endeavour to win to his side the Archbishop of Köln and any other German prince whom he could secure ; and, while his preparations for war were at their height, he tried to persuade the Pope that he was working for a universal peace.

Frederick William, on his part, had many reasons for desiring to delay war with France. Leopold was, as usual, shuffling and hesitating. The Turks were still uncertain in their attitude. On the other hand, Sobieski, who might have been expected to be brought by anti-Turkish feeling into alliance with Brandenburg, was alienated from the Elector by a quarrel about a claim which the murdered Ludwig had made on some Polish lands. As the Elector had now definitely abandoned all hope of recovering Pomerania, he might look forward to reviving the Swedish zeal for Protestantism. But the Swedes would only listen to proposals for an alliance on the condition that the Elector would join them in attacks on Norway, in which he had no inclination to take part. Under these circumstances Frederick William still hesitated to take direct action against France; and he even received back at his Court a minister whom he had dismissed for his approval of French acts of aggression. William

of Orange, indeed, was at one time vexed by his uncle's pacific policy; and he bitterly remonstrated with him for preferring the opinion of the merchants of Amsterdam to that of his nephew. But Frederick William succeded in arousing Amsterdam to a zeal for the Protestant cause, and in reconciling its Council to the Prince of Orange.

In the meantime Louis was growing continually stronger by his alliances with German princes; and he gave a curious proof that, even now, he felt less fear and jealousy of Frederick William than of the German Emperor. Marshal Schomberg, who had served in the French army, but whose Huguenot principles had led him to resign his position there, had offered his services to Frederick William. As a French officer he felt that he needed Louis' sanction to this change of service. As, however, the Marshal had been previously offered service in the army of the German Empire, Louis decided to sanction his acceptance of Frederick William's offer as the lesser evil of the two; and Schomberg began to organize the Brandenburg force.

At the same time Louis was again menacing Germany by building a new fort at ten miles distance from Trier. But, though Frederick William joined in the protest against this new violation of German territory, Leopold and many of the German princes still hesitated to act; and the King of Denmark allied himself with the King of France, an alliance shortly after

strengthened by the adhesion of Hanover. Frederick William felt that, under these circumstances, little or no hope could be grounded on the resistance of Germany to the advancing tide of French conquest. He even refused to support the candidature of Leopold's son Joseph for the future election to the German Empire ; and he advised Leopold to defer any settlement of the territorial arrangements between France and Germany till the Turkish war was finally ended. Yet, in spite of these appearances of despair, there never was a time at which Frederick William was less disposed to abandon the struggle against French aggressions than now ; and he extorted a fresh grant from the reluctant Clèves Estates for the strengthening of his forces.

The fact was that, finding it hopeless to offer direct opposition to France on the Continent, he had resolved to stake all his chances of victory on freeing England from the yoke of France and the Pope.

It will be remembered that the mission of young Schwerin to England had convinced that keen-sighted diplomatist that there was a force of parliamentary influence, backed by a real public opinion in our nation, which was scarcely to be found in any Continental country.

In spite of the corruptions of the Stuart Government, the base methods of which many of the Whig leaders made use, and the strange prejudices of the English mob, there still remained much of those

traditions of genuine love of freedom which had been cultivated by centuries of partial self-government and national independence; and Frederick William, in spite of his frequent inclinations to despotism, had enough sense of the value of popular liberty to recognize the important aid which these English traditions could give to a champion of European independence against French Chauvinism.

Indeed, the Elector had gone so far in his sympathy with English popular feeling that he had even given help to some of the followers of the Duke of Monmouth when they escaped to Clèves. But it was on his nephew, William of Orange, that his real hope rested. In August 1686 he had already joined William in forming an alliance with the opponents of James II. These purposes, however, he was not to see realized. The ill-health, which had been growing on him for several years, now became more intolerable. Even in his last illness his thoughts were still occupied both with his home (and his foreign) policy; and while he expressed deep regret that he had not been able to relieve his people from more of their burdens of taxation, he yet showed his future designs by giving as his last pass-words to his sentries the words "Amsterdam and London."

On May 9, 1688, he died, almost seven months before his nephew, William of Orange, embarked on that expedition to England which Frederick William had so eagerly planned, and to which he looked

forward as his one hope for the liberties of Europe and Protestantism.

So ended the career of Frederick William the Great Elector of Brandenburg, the real founder of the greatness of the Hohenzollern family; of the Kingdom of Prussia; and the first consolidator of Protestant Germany. His son Frederick succeeded to the Electorate and in 1701 received the title of King of Prussia from the German Emperor.

CHAPTER XVII

ESTIMATE OF FREDERICK WILLIAM'S WORK—COMPARISON OF HIM WITH HIS SUCCESSORS

I THINK it will be seen from a study of Frederick William's career that the characteristic that makes him unique in his time was the combination of an exceptionally wide outlook in European politics with the steady pursuit of certain definite aims. Unfortunately it was just this wide perception of a variety of issues, all of which in different ways affected the growth of the Brandenburg State, which provoked the charge of dishonesty and inconsistency. To a ruler like Sobieski, occupied with the one clear object of the deliverance of Poland from Turkish aggression and internal intrigue, it was utterly incomprehensible how a European statesman could turn from one alliance to another in so short a time, and appear now as the friend of Austria, now of Sweden, now of Holland, and now of France; and how he should seem to become cold, for a time, to the great danger which was threatening European civilization from the Turkish invasion. To De Witt he would seem an abettor of

military tyranny, and at the same time a dangerous and aggressive rival to Dutch traders.

As for the other rulers of Europe, they no doubt assumed that he was as unscrupulous as they were; and they would point to this or that change in his policy as proof of his treachery and self-seeking. And yet all this time he was keeping before his eyes the ideal of a free Protestant German State, which should revive the prosperity of Europe, hold in check the aggressions of self-seeking Chauvinists, and secure religious liberty to all. In welding this State together he had to encounter unreasoning local prejudices, mingled with a genuine zeal for old historic rights; and both these feelings could be exploited by the unscrupulous intrigues of his jealous neighbours. That he sometimes resorted to violent and illegal methods in achieving these aims cannot be disputed; nor can we defend all the diplomatic subtleties by which he justified his alliances, especially with France.

But, as I have shown, the wiser politicians, even among his enemies, were forced to admit his services to European civilization in the struggle against Turkey.

And, after all the terrible and extraordinary difficulties of his position are considered, we must admit that he achieved great results. He dragged up a half-starved and despairing population into vigorous life, moral, intellectual, and physical. He welded them into a flourishing and independent State, and by the

help of his nephew, William of Orange, he helped to break the power of the aggressive French Monarchy, and, last but not least, he showed in his guidance of his State an ideal of religious liberty such as had scarcely been realized before in Europe.

It has been the fashion of some of his biographers to compare Frederick William with the other ruler of his line, to whom historians have granted the name of Great; and in some cases the contrast has been made rather to the disparagement of Frederick William. I venture to think that such an estimate must be founded on the complete ignoring of moral considerations. While both of these rulers may be considered in the light of military leaders, Frederick II will be always remembered as the reckless invader of Silesia and the partitioner of Poland, while his great ancestor will be chiefly honoured as the liberator of German territory from the Swedes and the Poles; the steady champion of Dutch Protestantism and of German unity against French aggression, and the fellow-worker with the Polish king in delivering Europe from the Turks.

As to their services to the internal development of the State, it must be remembered that Frederick William had to face the ruin of the Thirty Years' War, to save his country from its effects, and to consolidate it into a strong State; and, while he raised its material condition to comparative comfort, he carried its intellectual development to a higher condition than

that of most of the other German States of the time, and promoted its commerce and means of communication, both internal and external, in a way which few sovereigns placed in so critical a position can have effected so completely. Frederick II may, indeed, have guided his country successfully through a formidable war, but it was a war which, if in a sense it may be called defensive, yet was the result of his own previous aggression, and brought much misery on Germany.

But it was, perhaps, in their attitude to religious liberty that Frederick William's superiority to his descendant was most conspicuous. A deeply religious man, with an intense feeling for his own sect, he yet carried his generosity and friendliness to men of all creeds to a point almost unknown at that period ; and he showed a genuine sympathy with those who suffered from persecution. While, too, he used the abilities of all who came to strengthen his State, whether physically, intellectually, or morally he never allowed such a welcome to interfere with his encouragement to genuine German feeling. This policy gives surely a clearer proof of genuine greatness than can be found in the creed of the flippant Voltairian, who encouraged the formation of a kind of museum of human intellectual curiosities, who were to him rather an object of amusement than of sympathy ; and, though he is sometimes talked of as a promoter of German unity, he practically discouraged good

German literature by his preference for the French language ; and his attack on Maria Theresa alienated much German feeling from him.

Neither ruler could claim to have appreciated or developed constitutional government in their dominions ; but, in this matter surely, Frederick William had excuses, which his descendant could scarcely plead. The need of welding his State together and securing it against foreign aggression was so ill recognized by the provincial Estates that one scarcely sees how, without very strong pressure, Frederick William could have carried out his schemes. That he acted in many cases violently and unjustly has been admitted ; and the absolute hostility to the meetings of Assemblies which he expressed in his instructions to his successor showed a want of foresight which may have produced bad results. But it would have required the outlook of an inspired prophet to foresee that real stable popular government might grow out of the aristocratic Estates, with their narrow prejudices. And in spite of this purpose, he evidently showed a real wish to find some meeting ground with these representatives of the various classes ; and he tried hard to avoid offending their feelings unduly. Moreover, his final attitude to England showed that he had really learnt to understand the uses of parliamentary government. For the poor he showed a genuine sympathy ; though he preferred removing their grievances by personal and special atrangements to encouraging their inde-

pendent growth. In one point, indeed ,he may be said to have been less fortunate than some of his descendants ; namely, that he did not live to see the fulfilment of several of the plans for which he had worked. But, in all the most important of these, the ends were achieved in so short a time after his death as to leave no doubt as to the effect which his work of preparation had produced. The success of his nephew's expedition to England made possible the combination against Louis XIV, which, if it produced much waste of blood and many injustices, both in Spain and Ireland, yet accomplished the immediate aim of the Elector in breaking for a time the overwhelming power of France.

The reforms of Knyphausen were easily completed with the assent of the new Elector, and placed the finances of Brandenburg on a footing which facilitated the removal of those burdens on the people which Frederick William had struggled to lessen.

Nor should we forget that the elevation of Frederick to the royal dignity did help to secure a more independent position for his descendants than the Electoral title would have implied. But the point in which the new dignity best realized the aims of the Great Elector was in its connection with the troublesome province of Prussia. A King of Brandenburg might still have provoked some local opposition among the Prussian nobles ; but the title of King of Prussia implied a union which, by giving special dignity to the reluctant

province, must have gone far to destroy any lingering separatist feeling.

Nor ought we to forget that, in consolidating his State, the Great Elector had always succeeded in drawing to his service independent German nobles who, by accepting the leadership of Brandenburg, helped to give a moral as well as a political unity to Germany. Such a consideration should recall to us the memory of a far nobler successor to Frederick William's work than can be found in any of his direct descendants. I refer to the great Baron von Stein, the liberator of the Prussian peasant from his narrow and oppressed condition,[1] the developer of local self-government in Prussia, the overthrower of Napoleon (that terrible inheritor of Louis XIV's policy), and the ardent promoter of German unity.

No doubt the Great Elector had not removed, even in part, the dependent position of the peasantry ; but he had used what means he saw to be helpful in lessening the oppression on them ; and in his removal

[1] By a curious oversight both Ranke and Carlyle have omitted to do justice to a ruler whom the latter professes in his way to admire. Frederick William I, the father of Frederick II, seems actually to have led the way in the abolition of serfdom. Dr. Lehr, in his collection of the Agrarian laws of Prussia, shows that in 1719, when Frederick William I was King of Prussia, serfdom was abolished in East Prussia, and this was completed and confirmed both for East Prussia and the Prussian part of Lithuania by 1723. Thus Stein was completing and enlarging the work of Frederick William I.

of the restrictions on the Guild regulations he showed the same sense of the need of freer play for the life of the towns which Stein showed in his encouragement of municipal government. No doubt Frederick William did not realize the advantage to German unity of the expression of the wishes of a people in popular assemblies ; but then he had not, like Stein, been forced to associate the overthrow of foreign tyranny with a genuine popular movement, hampered too often by the selfishness and short-sightedness of kings. If the Elector could have looked forward yet farther into the future, he might have noted with pity that unfortunate descendant of his, Frederick William III, who was so totally unequal to the task of building up either German unity or Prussian freedom from the wrecks left by the Napoleonic wars ; and who, like the Great Elector himself, must have often sighed for the return to life of that other Louise who had so often guided him wisely in his early struggles ; especially as, also like his more vigorous ancestor, he found all plans for freedom thwarted at every turn by the minister of the Hapsburg dynasty.

It would be indeed difficult to imagine what the attitude of the Great Elector would have been towards the great popular upheaval of 1848–1849 ; but one can hardly imagine that he would have approved *il gran rifiuto* of Frederick William IV, when, by rejecting the popular offer of the Crown of Germany, he finally broke the growing link between the movements for

German unity and those for constitutional freedom; and thus he prepared the way for the more militarist ideals of the later united Germany.

No doubt it may seem to some that the Elector might have been encouraged if he could have looked yet farther into the future and seen the German Empire restored to life by another Hohenzollern with an overwhelming Protestant following—a result too which was connected with another victory over French aggression. But I think the keen eye of the Elector would have seen in some of the methods used by the later victors a closer likeness to his aggression on the Spanish fleet, or his unfortunate collision with the Count of Neuburg, than to the noble policy which marked most of his career, and which led him to avoid needless war and aggression, and even to sacrifice his apparent interests, if he might thereby secure the willing support of Holland and Germany to his efforts for the freedom of Europe.

Let us hope that the new Germany, which will arise out of the ruins of the Empire founded by William I, and destroyed by William II, may return to as high ideals as those of the Great Elector, and carry them out as steadily, and more successfully, and above all more pacifically.

INDEX

Amsterdam, 175, 177
Arlington, 142
Austria, House of, *see* Hapsburg

Bacon, 90
Benningsen, 142
Berlin, Misery of, in Thirty Years' War, 37; Improvement of, 89
Bethune, Marquis de, 129
Blumenthal, 69
Bournonville, General, 124–5
Brandenburg, Estates of, 133–4
Brandenburg, George William, his career, 11–19
Brandenburg, Sufferings of, in Thirty Years' War, 37
Brandenburg, Towns of, 58–9, 129
Brandt, 115
Bremen, 71, 104–5, 132
Bruckmann, 15
Burgsdorf, Conrad of, 29, 57

Calvinism of Elector and Louise, 43, 45
Calvinists, Rivalry of, with Lutherans, 10
Canstein, Raban von, 77
Carl Emil, 125, 167
Charles II, 93–4, 109, 117, 136–49, 162
Christina of Sweden, 38–9
Clèves, 15, 18, 33, 38, 39, 40, 45, 46, 64, 81, 100–101, 112–14, 116–17, 134, 154, 156, 161, 172, 176, 177
Clèves-Jülich, 12, 18
Coleman, Edward, 148

Denmark, 79
Derfflinger, General, 130–1
De Ruyter, 110–11
Descartes, 90
De Witt, 84–6, 105–6, 108–11, 179–80
Dorothea of Brunswick, 116, 166–9, 173–4
Draheim, 79, 107
Dreier (Christian), 40–1
Duisburg, University of, 90–1
Dutch trade with India, 55

East India Company, Brandenburg, 159
East India Company, Dutch, 157
East India Company, English, 158
Edict of Nantes, Revocation of, 163, 165
Elbing, 79, 88, 107
Elector, *see* Frederick William
Elsass, 123–5
Empire, Holy Roman, 23
Erfurt, 99

Fagel, 137
Fehrbellin, Battle of, 131
Ferdinand II of Austria, 13, 14, 18–19, 52, 54, 66, 68
Ferdinand III, Nomination of, 69; His successor, 81
Finance of Brandenburg, 76–9
Frankfurt on the Oder, University of, 89–90
Frederick, son of Frederick William, 167–70. *See* Prussia

Frederick William (Great Elector), 10, 24; at Midnight Society, 25; What he learnt in Holland, 25–6; Proposals for marriage, 26–7, 38–39; His accession, 27; Assumes full power, 31–2; Difficulties with Prussia, 36; Attitude to peasants, 49–50; Attitude to religious liberty, 52–3; Struggle in Elsass, 123–6; War with Sweden, 125–32; Attitude to James II, 162; Attitude towards William's expedition to England, 175–7; Death of, 177–8

Gerhardt, Paul, 91–2
Germany changes during Thirty Years' War, 9; Dangers to, 9–10
Goltz, 15
Guilds, 92
Gustavus Adolphus, 12, 13–17

Hapsburg, House of, Growing power of, 9, 41–2
Harrington, 141
Hesse, Elector of, 38
Hohenzollern disliked by Lutherans, 10; Christian, William of, 11; George William of, His accession and character, 11–16; His death, 19; His wife, 24
Hohenzollern, Dynasty of, 21–2
Holland, Estates of, 63, 64, 86, 109, 118–20
Homburg, Prinz von, 141
House of Commons, 139–49
Huguenots, 96
Hungary, 160–1

Jaegerndorf seized by Austrians, 11; Claims of Frederick William on, 69, 82, 151
James II, 162, 177
Jülich, *see* Clèves

Kalkstein, 114–15
Kiuprili, 97
Knyphausen, 78–9, 184
Königsberg, 40–1

Lauderdale, 141
Lausitz seized by Austrians, 11
Leipzig, Convention at, 16
Leopold of Austria, 81, 82–4, 87, 88, 97–8, 105, 116–18, 160–2, 170
Leuchtmann, 24
Leyden University, 24
Liegnitz, Duke of, 150–1
Louis XIV, 92–7, 99, 101, 105–7, 110–11, 116, 118, 123–4, 138, 160, 161, 162–5, 172–3, 175
Louise, *see* Orange
Lutherans, Ambitions of, 10

Magdeburg, separated from Hohenzollern territory, 11, 13; Massacre at, 16; Surrender of, to Elector, 104
Mainz, Elector of, 98–9
Mazarin, 55, 81, 82
Michael, 127, 128
Monmouth, Duke of, 177
Montecuccoli, 118–19
Montespan, Mme. de, 153
Münster, Bishop of, 99–101; Congress of, *see* Westphalia
Mysleuta, Christian, 40

Neuburg, Count of, 12, 62–4
Nimwegen, Peace of, 134–5

Oliva, Peace of, 88
Orange, Henry Frederick of, 12, 25, 42, 47, 84
Orange, Louise of, 42–3; Marriage of, with Elector, 43; Her character and influence, 44–7, 72, 75, 95; Her death, 102–3; Its consequences, 104–5
Orange, Maurice, 86
Orange, Principality of, 95–6, 98
Orange, William II, 84
Orange, William the Silent, 85

Orange, William III, 84–5, 111, 117–20, 133; His marriage to Mary, 143–4, 163, 172
Orleans, Duchess of, 111
Oxenstierna, 39

Peasants, Dutch, 47–9; of Brandenburg, 49–50, 76–8, 129
Poland, Diet of, 67, 114–15
Poland, Maria Louise, Queen of, 74, 79, 80, 88, 94
Poland, Power of, 19; Rule of, over Prussia, 35; Claim to Prussia renounced, 75
Poland, Casimir, 67–8, 72, 79
Pomerania, 51–6, 69, 87, 88, 133, 134
Popish Plot, 148
Protestants, Persecution of, by Leopold, 126; by Louis XIV, 163–5
Pruckmann, 14
Prussia, Frederick I, King of, 178, 184–5. Note to, 185
Prussia, Frederick II, 181–3
Prussia, Frederick William III, 186
Prussia, Frederick William IV, 186
Prussia, Relations of, with Poland and Brandenburg, 34; Nobles of, 39, 57, 114–15; Estates of, 57, 114
Prussia, William I, 187
Prussia, William II, 187

Rathenow, 130
Raule, Benjamin, 157–9
Rébenac, Comte de, 153–4, 164, 172
Rhine League, 83, 97–8, 107
Richelieu, 19
Roman Catholic, 9
Roth, 114–55
Rupert, Prince, 138, 139, 145

Saxony, Electors of, 10, 16, 161
Schwarzenberg, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 26–9; His death, 30; His son, 31–2
Schwerin, Otto, the younger, 137–49
Schwerin, Otto von, 43, 45–6, 75, 77, 80, 121–2, 167
Schomberg, Marshal, 175
Schulenburg, Werner von, 24
Schwiebus, 165
Silesia, seized by Austrians, 11; Disputes about, 165
Sobieski, John, 126–9, 155, 161–2, 179
Stein, Baron von, 185
St. Germain, Peace of, 154
Strasburg, 125
Stryke, 90–91
Stuart, *see* Charles II
Stuart, *see* James II
Sweden, Charles Gustavus of, 79, 80, 82, 83, 87
Sweden, Christina, Queen of, *see* Christina
Sweden, Gustavus Adolphus of, 12, 13–15, 16, 17

Tannenberg, Defeat of Teutonic knights at, 35
Temple, Sir William, 139, 148
Teutonic knights, 34–5
Thirty Years' War, 9
Tilly, 16
Transylvania, 162
Triple Alliance, 108–9
Turks, Invasion by, 161, 162

Verjus, 120
Vossem, Treaty of, 121, 136, 138

Waldeck, George Frederick von, 64–7, 71–3, 75, 101
Wehlau, Peace of, 75, 115
Weimar, Bernard von, 19
Wesel, 172–3
Westphalia, Peace of, 60; Congress of, 61–2
William the Silent, *see* Orange
William III, *see* Orange
Winterfeld, 14
Wittgenstein, 54
Wyngary Johann, 47

York, Duke of, 143–4, 147–8

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